絶園のテンペスト

原作：城平 京
構成：左 有秀
作画：彩崎 廉

6

～THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER～

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GC ガンガンコミックス

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6

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絶園のテンペスト 6

~ The Civilization Blaster ~

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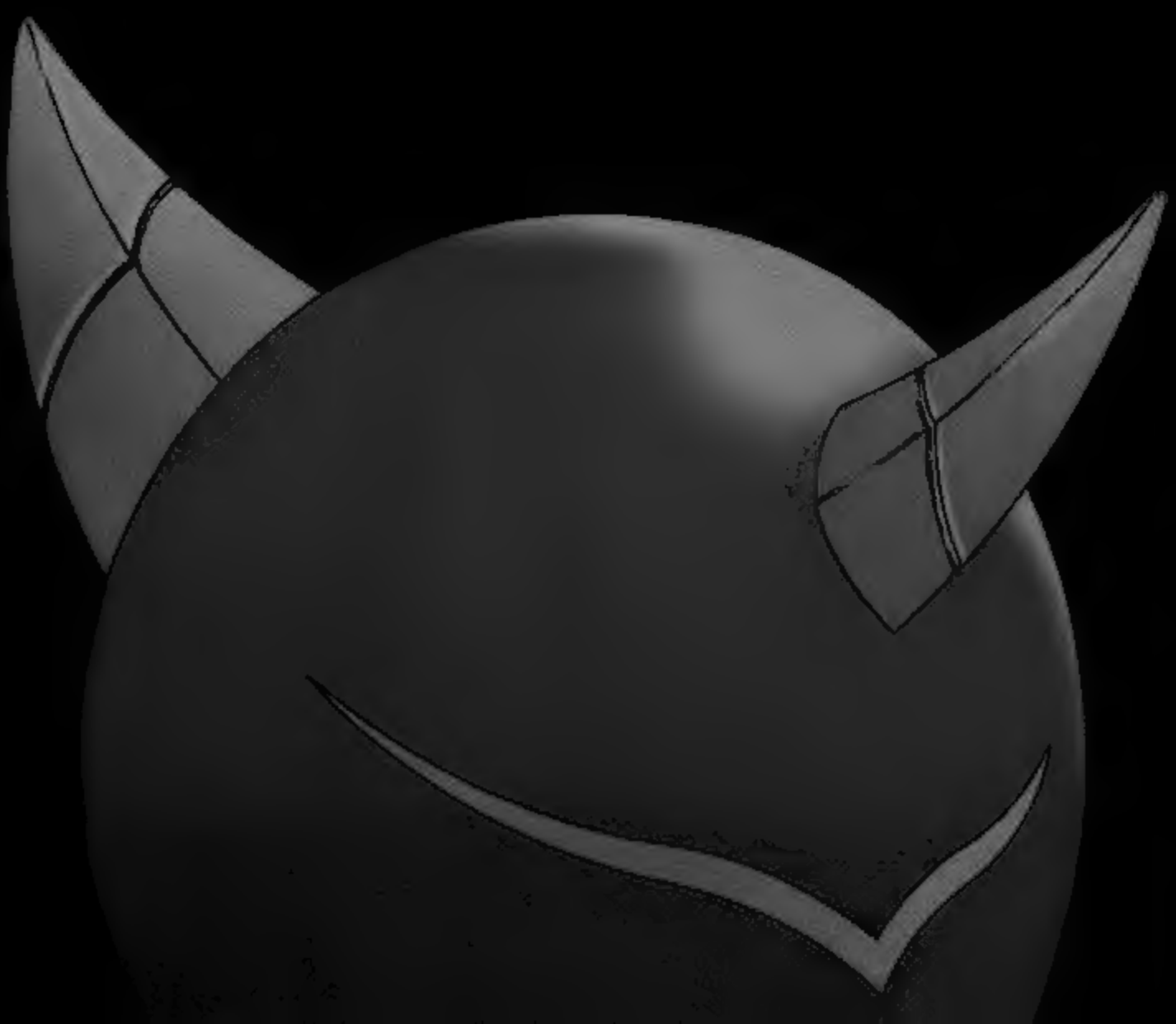


絶園のテンペスト

Chapter 25: Resolved

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

AM 7:30
Yawn...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS,
YOU SURE ARE LIVING THE GOOD LIFE, COMING HOME IN THE MORNING.
HEY.
I'M BACK.

I BET YOU HAD A GREAT TIME ESCORTING SOME FLAMBOYANT OLDER WOMAN,
PLAYING AROUND WITH HER ALL DAY.
GIVE ME A BREAK.
I WASN'T DOING ANYTHING WRONG.
Sfx: Gacha
YOSHINO WAS WITH ME TOO.
OH,
AND WHY EXACTLY WERE YOU WITH YOSHINO-SAN?
I THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT TIME HE GOT A GIRL-FRIEND,
SO I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO INTRO-DUCE HIM TO SOME GIRLS.
IT DIDN'T SEEM AS IF YOSHINO WAS AGAINST THE IDEA OR ANYTHING...
SO YOU SEE,
I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING BAD.
SO CHILL OUT, ALL RIGHT?
IF I WERE TO TRY ANYTHING STUPID, HE'D STOP ME.
Sfx: Ugh...

HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY THINK...
THAT I'D FEEL ANY BETTER KNOWING THAT YOSHINO-SAN WAS WITH YOU?
Whoa, that's harsh...
WHY WOULD THAT KID, WHO PUTS ON AIRS OF BEING HARMLESS AND INNOCENT,
WHEN HE'S ACTUALLY FOUL AND EVIL TO THE CORE, STOP YOU FROM DOING ANYTHING?
WHY DO YOU,
HATE YOSHINO SO MUCH?
CLANK
YOU'RE ASKING WHY I HATE HIM?
IT'S OBVIOUS WHY.

GET A CLUE ALREADY...

I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT...
TCH.

BUT IS IT POSSIBLE THAT AIKA WAS RIGHT?

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT HE WAS FINALLY FINISHED.
THAT HAYAKAWA...
THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BE SHAKEN ONCE MORE.
WITH THE APPEARANCE OF THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN,"
ALTHOUGH WE ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT THE FUSS ABOUT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WAS DYING DOWN,
HAYAKAWA'S THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE MOST ABOUT MAGIC.
BUT IN THE END,

WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN WEAK AGAINST FOREIGN DIPLOMACY THERE ARE EVEN PEOPLE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS HERE ALREADY
IT SEEMS THERE'S QUITE A BIT OF PRESSURE TO HANDLE THIS MATTER APPROPRIATELY, NOT ONLY FROM OUR GOVERNMENT, BUT ALSO FROM THOSE ABROAD AS WELL.

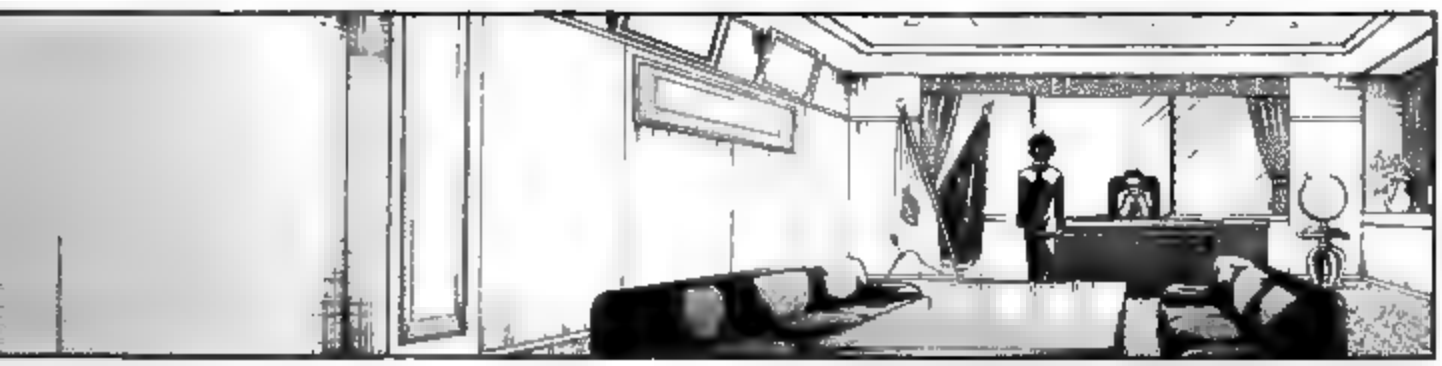
IT JUST SHOWS THAT EVEN IF IT LEAVES A BAD AFTER-TASTE, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO RELY ON HIS INFORMATION AND CONTACTS...

ALTHOUGH IT HAS ONLY BEEN THREE MONTHS SINCE HIS DEMOTION,
IT SEEMS HE'LL BE AT THE CENTRE ONCE MORE

DOESN'T IT SEEM ALMOST LIKE HIS APPEARANCE WAS CALCULATED TO SUPPORT HAYAKAWA'S RESURGENCE?

YOU MEAN THE TIMING OF THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN'S" APPEARANCE?
BUT THE TIMING ALMOST SEEMS TOO GOOD, DOESN'T IT?
YEAH

CAN HE DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS SITUATION?
WHETHER IT'S TRUE OR NOT,
IN ALL THIS BUSINESS INVOLVING THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN".
THERE'S A RUMOUR THAT HE'S PULLING THE STRINGS IN THE SHADOWS,



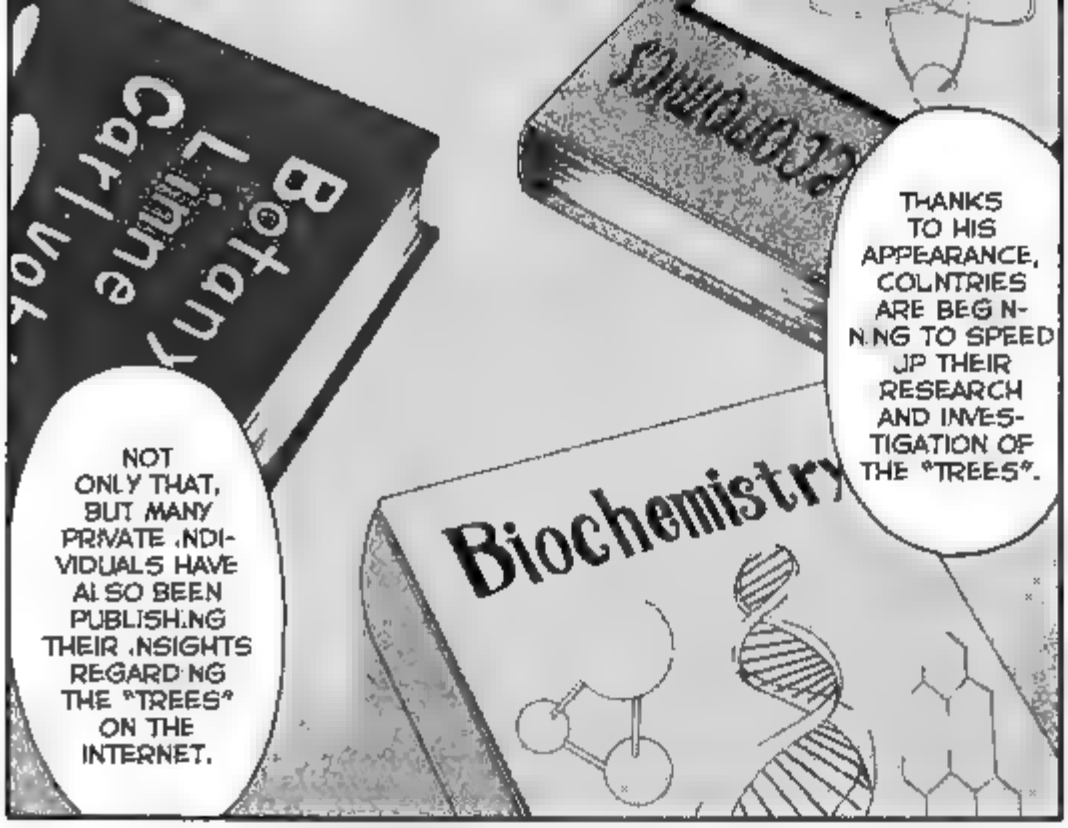
WHAT ARE YOU PLOTTING?

Sfx: Heh...

YOU MUST BE HAPPY THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" APPEARED.

BOTH THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN".
I WILL REPORT EVERYTHING THAT IS RELATED TO THE PLANS TO DEAL WITH THEM.

BUT NOTHING ELSE.


Botany
Carl Linne Vol.
Economics
Biochemistry
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT MANY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS HAVE ALSO BEEN PUBLISHING THEIR INSIGHTS REGARDING THE "TREES" ON THE INTERNET.
THANKS TO HIS APPEARANCE, COUNTRIES ARE BEGINNING TO SPEED UP THEIR RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION OF THE "TREES".

YES.

NO, I WAS REFERRING TO YOU, PERSONALLY.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU PLOTTING BEHIND THAT IMPENETRABLE MASK OF YOURS?

THERE ARE MANY MORE RESOURCES BEING DIRECTED TOWARDS THE INVESTIGATION AS WELL
THIS WILL SURELY BRING ABOUT A POSITIVE RESULT FOR US.

AND THE ONLY ONE IN THE ORGANISATION WHO CAN SOLVE THIS,
IS ME.

I AM MERELY TRYING TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION.

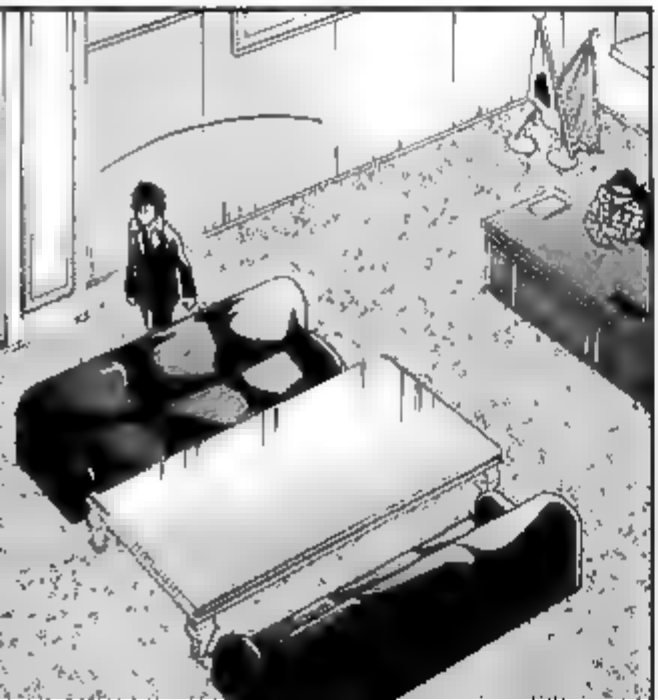
THE FATE OF OUR CIVILIZATION HANGS BETWEEN THESE TWO "TREES,"

AND FOR THAT REASON, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO JUSTIFY THE MEANS BY THE END?

EXACTLY.

ALL KINDS OF DISASTERS ARE ORIGINATING N JAPAN.
IT'S NO SURPRISE THEY SUSPECT US OF COVERING SOMETHING UP.

FROM OUR GOVERNMENT'S PERSPECTIVE, WE'RE ALREADY REVEALING A LOT OF INFORMATION, BUT THEY ARE NOT OF THE SAME MIND
THE UNITED NATIONS IS DEMANDING AN EXPLANATION CONCERNING THE "TREES".



UNDERSTOOD.

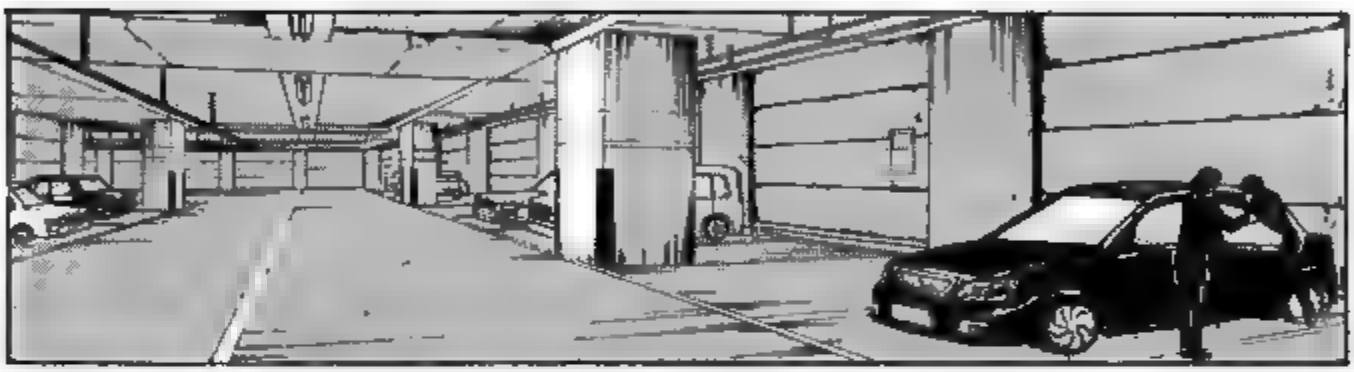
I HUMBLY REQUEST THAT YOU GIVE THEM AN EXPLANATION THAT WON'T ANTAGONIZE THEM FURTHER.
ALRIGHT?

THE SURVIVORS WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THAT.
DON'T FORGET THAT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.
LAST YEAR... ON YOUR ORDERS, THE COUNTERMEASURE FORCES WERE DISPATCHED...
AND DECIMATED.

MOREOVER, SINCE I LOST MY ADVANTAGE,
I WASN'T ABLE TO STOP THE DESTRUCTION FROM ESCAPING INTO THE WIDER WORLD
YES.

THEN TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, AND SOLVE THIS CRISIS.
FAR SURPASSES A PETTY DEMOTION.
THAT KIND OF RESPONSIBILITY,

YES, SIR.
AS IT IS NOW,
YOU WON'T HAVE A PLEASANT DEATH.



LET'S GET GOING.

Sfx: Phew

TODAY WE HAVE PEOPLE FOLLOWING US FROM THREE DIFFERENT FORCES.
YOU'RE A MAN WITH MANY ENEMIES, AREN'T YOU. .

I'LL BE WATCHED BY INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS ALIKE,
AND BY MANY WHO THINK I'M IN THE WAY.

THEY OBVIOUSLY SUSPECT THAT I WAS THE ONE,
WHO MADE THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" APPEAR.

THERE IS A BARRIER ERECTED OVER THE ROOM IN THE MANSION.
PENETRATING THAT, OR EVEN JUST TRYING TO ATTACK OR EAVESDROP ARE ALL IMPOSSIBLE.

IF A MAGICIAN OF KUSARIBE WASN'T PROTECTING ME,
I WOULD HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED OR REMOVED LONG AGO.

I WILL DEFINITELY MAKE SURE YOU STAY SAFE.
BUT IF YOU DO ANYTHING FUNNY...

THERE IS ONE AROUND THIS CAR TOO.

I KNOW.
I WON'T LET YOU OFF LIGHTLY.
THE LAST TIME I MADE AN ENEMY OF THE KUSARIBE CLAN, IT DIDN'T EXACTLY END WELL.
I WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE AGAIN.
NO MATTER WHAT, I PLAN WITHOUT MAGIC,
I WON'T HAVE A HOPE OF DOING ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE TREES
YEAH,
TONIGHT.
BY THE WAY,
ISN'T HANEMURA SUPPOSED TO BE COMING BACK TODAY?

Urgh...

THOUGH IT SEEMS HE'S ALREADY COMPLAINING ABOUT JET LAG OR SOMETHING SILLY.

I GOT ONE DAY OFF,
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY FUN AT ALL!

Sfx: Pissed
Lm.

WHAT'S WRONG, HANE-MURA?
DID YOU TIRE YOURSELF OUT HAVING FUN IN HAWAII?

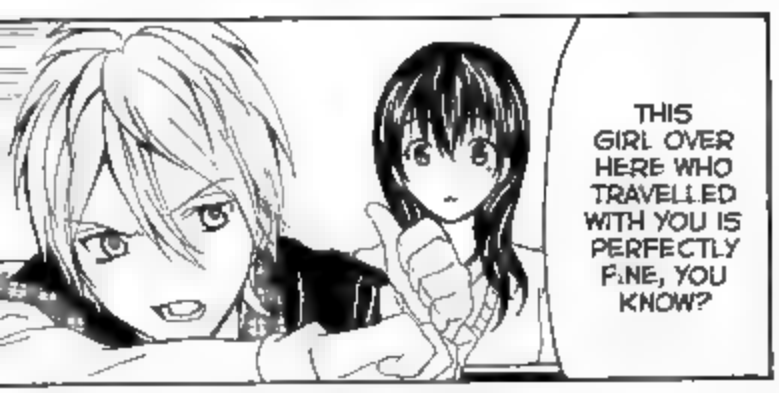
AND THAT "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" WHO CAUSED THAT HUBBUB,
WAS YOU, RIGHT?

THERE WAS ENDLESS HUBBUB ABOUT THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" HAVING SHOWN UP.
THERE WASN'T A SINGLE TOURISTIC, RELAXED ATMOS-PHERE TO BE FOUND!

I KNOW, BUT...

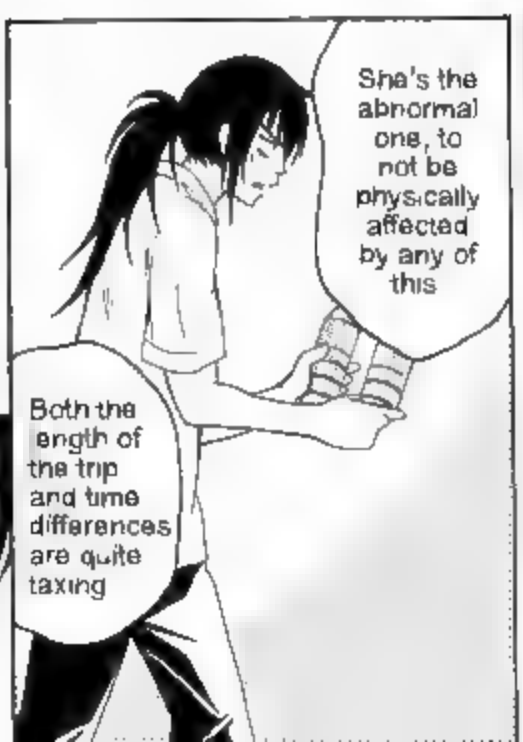
THE HERO OF THE NEW WORLD WAS THIS PATHETIC ..
IF ONLY PEOPLE KNEW THAT THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" THAT THEY'RE CALLING

Ugh
This stupid jet lag from riding the plane too long is killing me ..


THIS GIRL OVER HERE WHO TRAVELLED WITH YOU IS PERFECTLY FINE, YOU KNOW?

Sigh
EVEN THE TEMPERATURE AND CLIMATE CHANGES A LOT FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER .

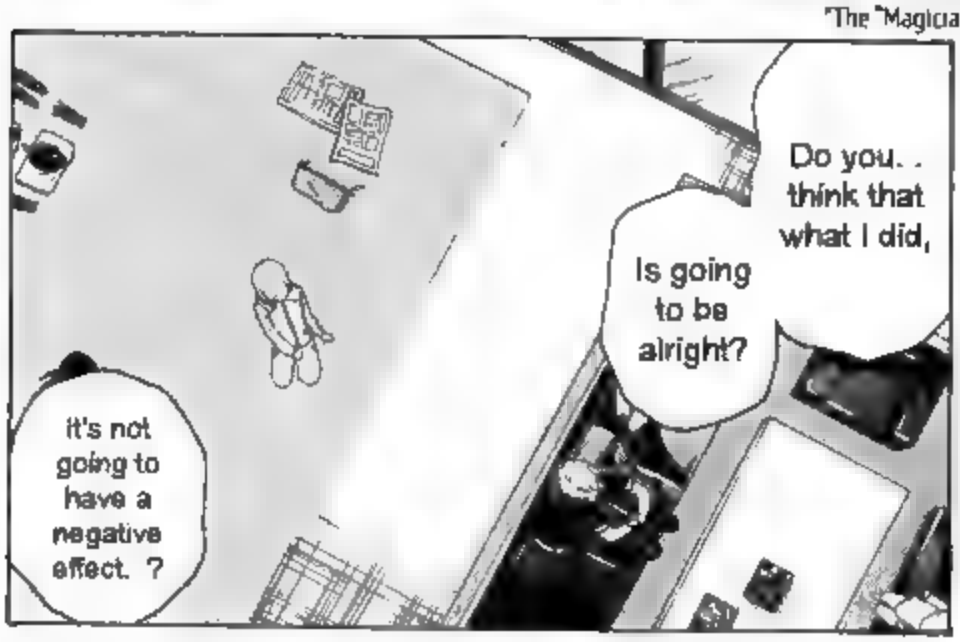
HAHAHA.


She's the abnormal one, to not be physically affected by any of this
Both the length of the trip and time differences are quite taxing

FRAULEIN-DONO IS SUPER-HUMAN.

"Newspaper: The Government's Response to the Crisis

"The "Magician of Zetsuen's" Effect on the World Stock Market.



Wave
Wave
YOU SHOULD JUST GO GET SOME SHUT-EYE.
EITHER WAY, IT'S NOT AS IF YOU CAN TELL JUST BY THINKING ABOUT IT.
WHO KNOWS?
IF YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT, THEN MAYBE IT WIL.., NO?
THEN TOMORROW, YOU CAN SEE WHAT KIND OF EFFECT YOU HAD,
WITH YOUR OWN EYES AND EARS.
Eh?
I JUST FLEW BACK TO THE COUNTRY AND DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON EITHER~
AT THE VERY LEAST,
YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT THIS ONE KNOWS WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.
Ugh...
I really have a bad feeling about this though...

IT'S TRUE THAT THANKS TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS,"
THE WORLD RETURNED TO ITS PEACEFUL STATE.

Sfx. Point

HOWEVER!

THAT IS NOT A RESULT OF HUMAN EFFORT NOR ONE OF PEACE!

THE ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN BETTERED, BEYOND RECOGNITION,
AND PUBLIC SAFETY, AS YOU CAN SEE, HAS ALSO IMPROVED.

TO LIVE WHILE STARING UP AT THAT TREE IN THIS PEACE THAT WAS NOT ACHIEVED BY OUR OWN EFFORTS,
DOES ANYONE HERE TRULY BELIEVE THAT THAT IS A PROPER WAY TO LIVE?!
THIS IS NO MORE THAN A SYMBOL THAT HAS BEEN IMPOSED UPON US, IRRELEVANT OF OUR HARD WORK.
IS THAT REALLY SOMETHING WE CAN ACCEPT?!
HERE ARE MANY WHO LOST THEIR FAMILIES AND EVERYTHING THEY OWNED!
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" IS ALWAYS THERE,
AND WILL FOREVER THREATEN TO STEAL AWAY FROM US ALL THAT WE HOLD DEAR!
WHILE THESE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" SYMBOLIZE THE PEACE WE LIVE IN,
THEY ARE ALSO A WARNING OF ALL THE LIVES THEY STOLE WITHOUT MERCY!
AS AN INDIVIDUAL, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN BE PROUD OF SUCH A LIFE?!
SO I ASK YOU, DO YOU DESIRE A LIFE OF CONSTANT FEAR?

WE MUST UNITE,
OUR EFFORTS TO DESTROY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"!

EVEN IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS THAT WE MUST FACE WITHIN THIS WORLD, THEY ARE JUST ANOTHER FACET OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN.
IF THERE IS CONFLICT, THEN WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO RESOLVE IT BY OUR OWN HANDS.
WHAT IS TRULY VALUABLE, IS A WORLD WHERE HUMANS THEMSELVES HAVE BANDED TOGETHER TO FIGHT CONFLICT!

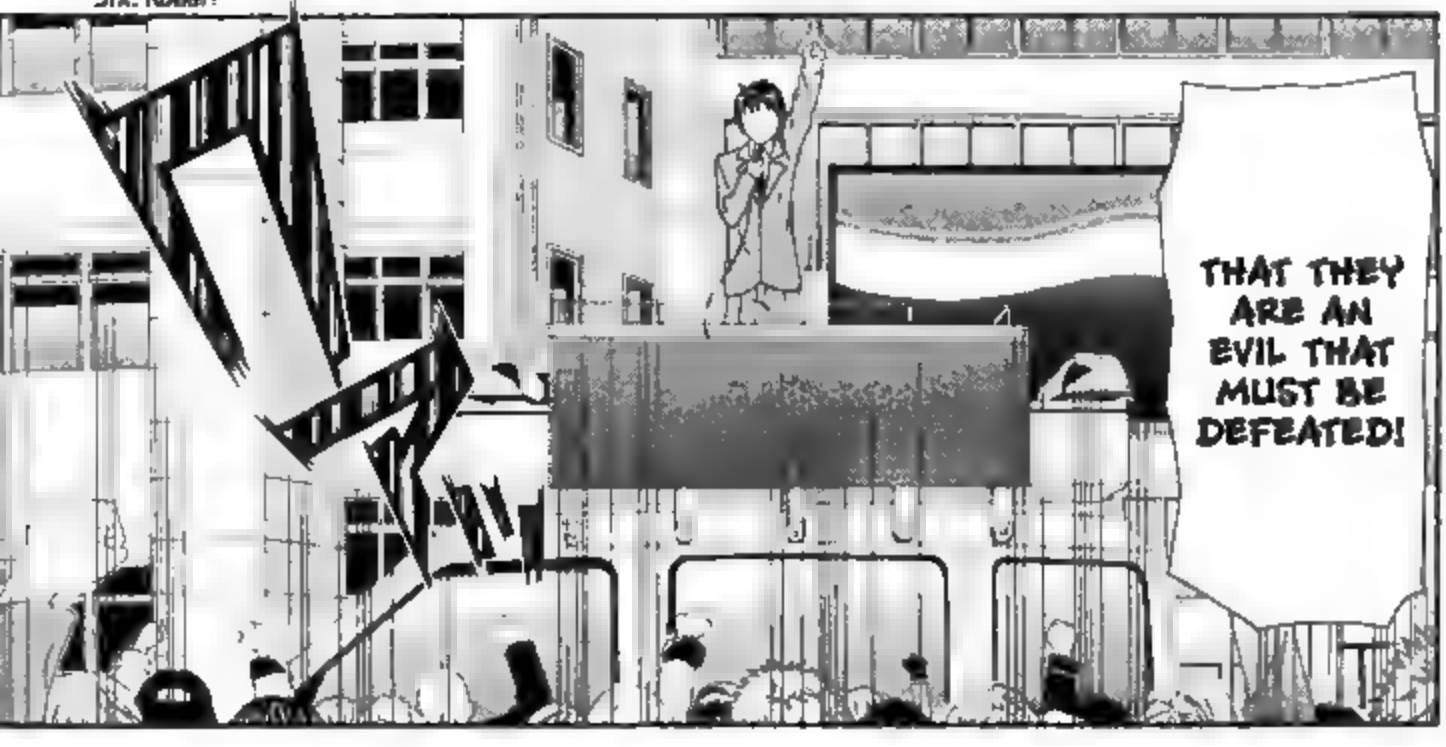
Sfx. Clap x3

WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHETHER THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" WHO CAN DESTROY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS,"
IS ON OUR SIDE OR NOT

YEAH!
YEAAAH!

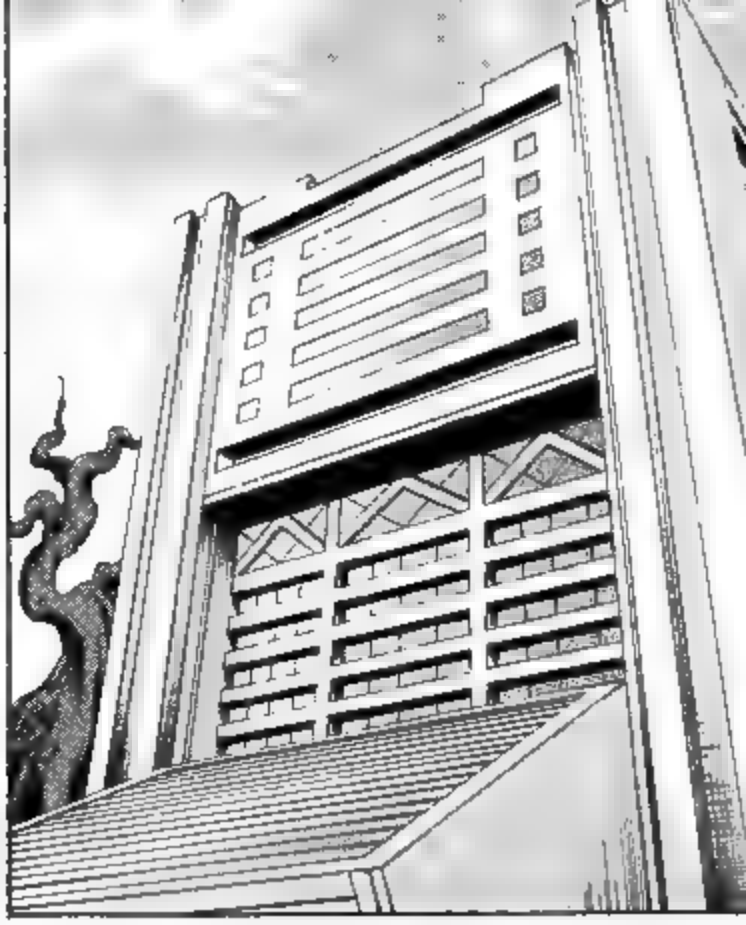
LET US RAISE OUR VOICES AT THIS OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED TO US!
AND SHOUT THAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" ARE A MISTAKEN RULER!
HOW-EVER!
HIS ACTIONS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY RIGHT!

Sfx: Roaar!



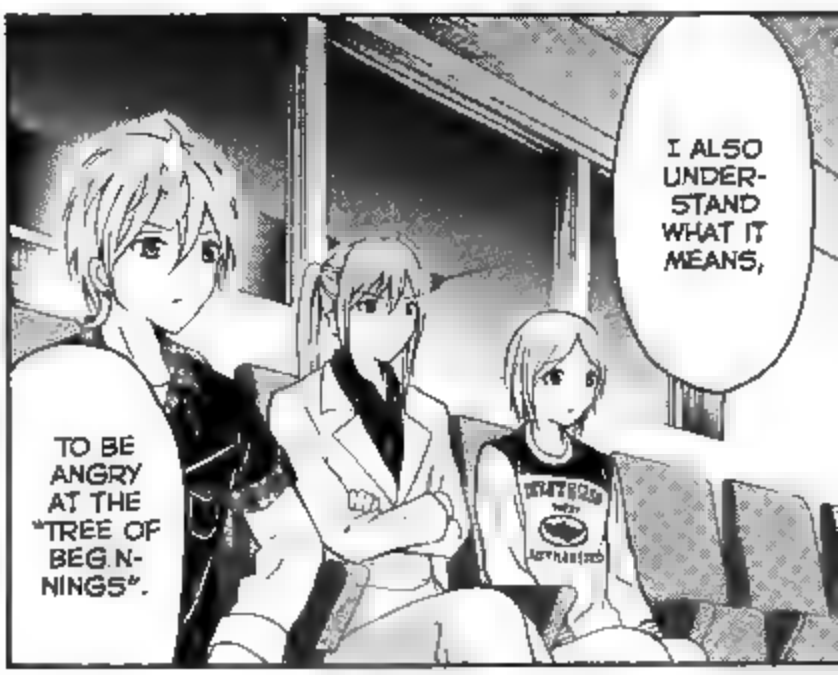
SFX: Clap x3

IT IS TRUE THAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS,"
HAVE TAKEN MUCH FROM US.

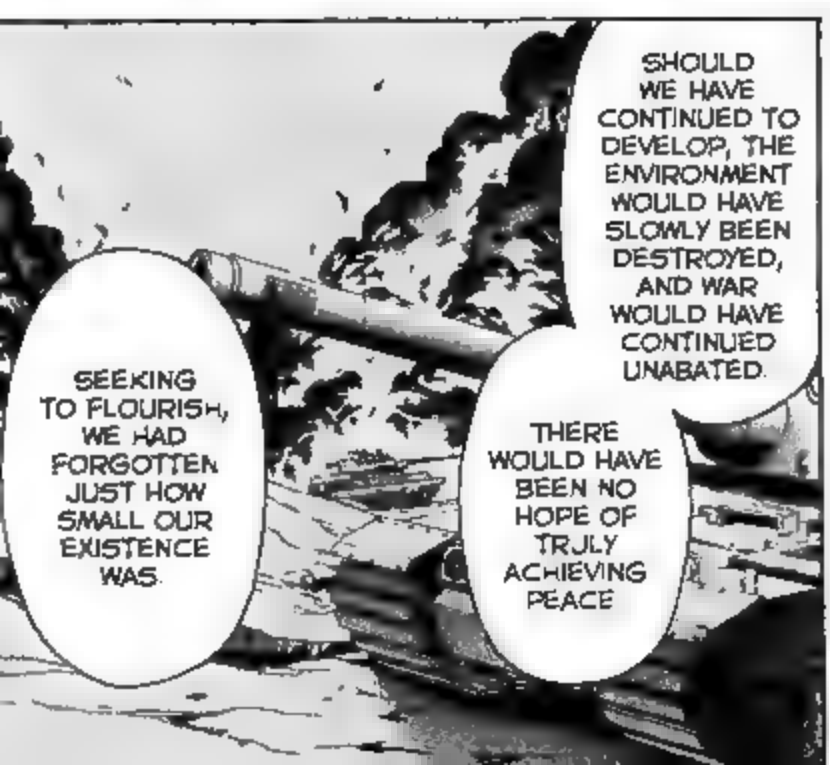


I ALSO KNOW THAT THERE WERE MANY FUNERALS THAT COULD NOT BE HELD BECAUSE THE BODIES OF THE FALLEN COULD NOT BE RECOVERED.
I KNOW THAT THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE LOST THEIR FAMILIES.

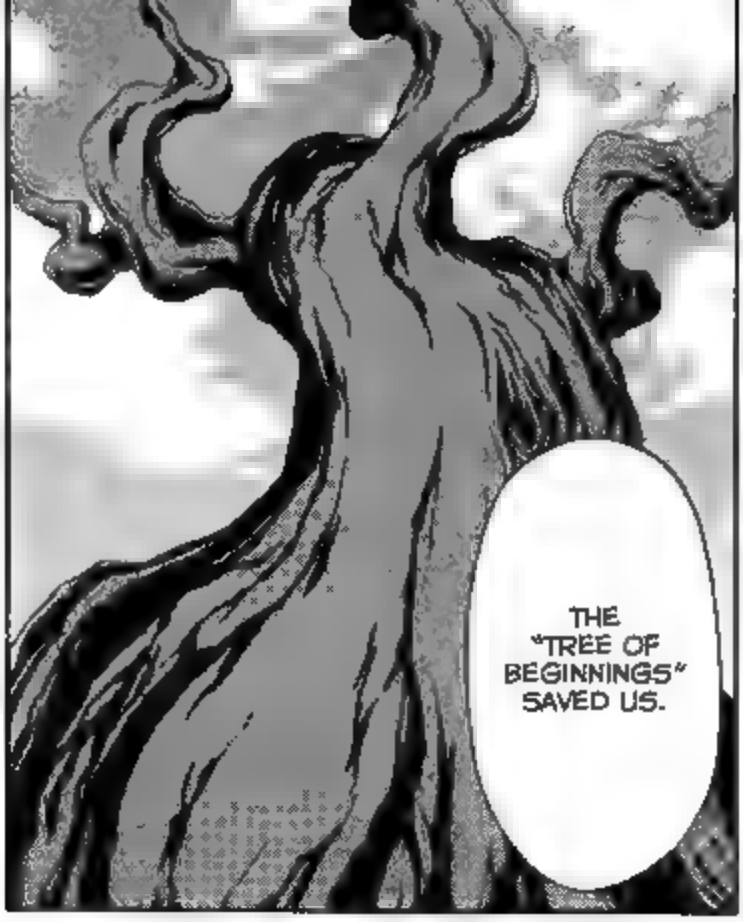
AND YET,
THE WORLD HAS BECOME SO PEACEFUL.


I ALSO UNDER-STAND WHAT IT MEANS,
TO BE ANGRY AT THE "TREE OF BEG.N-NINGS".

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND ALL MANNER OF ATOMIC WARHEADS THAT COULD HAVE WIPED OUT HUMANITY ITSELF WERE DISPOSED OF BY THE "TREES".
IF THE TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAD NOT APPEARED,
IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT WE WOULD HAVE OBLITERATED OURSELVES AT OUR OWN BEHEST.


SHOULD WE HAVE CONTINUED TO DEVELOP, THE ENVIRONMENT WOULD HAVE SLOWLY BEEN DESTROYED, AND WAR WOULD HAVE CONTINUED UNABATED.
THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO HOPE OF TRULY ACHIEVING PEACE
SEEKING TO FLOURISH, WE HAD FORGOTTEN JUST HOW SMALL OUR EXISTENCE WAS.

THE PATH TO SELF-DESTRUCTION THAT WE FOLLOWED WAS EVIDENT.


THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" SAVED US.

WE HAD ALREADY AMASSED TOO MUCH POWER,
AND YET STILL PURSUED GREEDILY AFTER MORE WEALTH.

WE GRASPED FOR THINGS WE COULD NOT USE,
AND WERE ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE.

MANY SACRIFICES WERE MADE, BUT IF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAD NOT APPEARED,
A MUCH GREATER SACRIFICE WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE! WE WOULD HAVE GONE EXTINCT WITHIN A MATTER OF DECADES!

HOWEVER, WE CANNOT VENT THAT DESTRUCTIVE FEELING TOWARDS THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS".
WE MUST CHANNEL IT INTO GAINING THE RIGHT STRENGTH TO CARRY US FORWARD!

WE SHOULD NOT FORGET OUR ANGER,
NOR SHOULD WE FORGET OUR PAIN!

WE SHOULD NOT SEEK TO DESTROY OURSELVES FOR ANY AMOUNT OF FOOLISH-NESS!
THAT WOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN THE WISH OF THOSE WHO LIVED IN THE WORLD OF STRIFE BEFORE US!
LET US REMEMBER ALL THAT THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS" HAS SAVED!
THERE ARE MANY OTHER COUNTRIES WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE CRIED LIKE WE HAVE, WHO WERE SAVED BY THESE TREES
WE MUST DEFEAT THE "MAGI-CIAN OF ZETSUEN"!
"THE MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" IS A MISTAKEN SYMBOL!
THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN FORGIVE SUCH AN EXISTENCE WITH THE PEACE THAT WE HAVE FINALLY ATTAINED BEFORE US!
Sfx: Clap x6
.....

YOU ARE THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN".
YOU STOOD UP TO SAVE THE WORLD, RIGHT?

UM...
I WONDER ..
WHICH OF THEM WAS RIGHT?

BUT... BUT ..

AFTER HEARING THEM SPEAK, IT'S LIKE THEY'RE BOTH RIGHT.
AREN'T YOU BEING SWAYED TOO EASILY?

IN THAT CASE,
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS WHICH OF THEM WAS CORRECT?

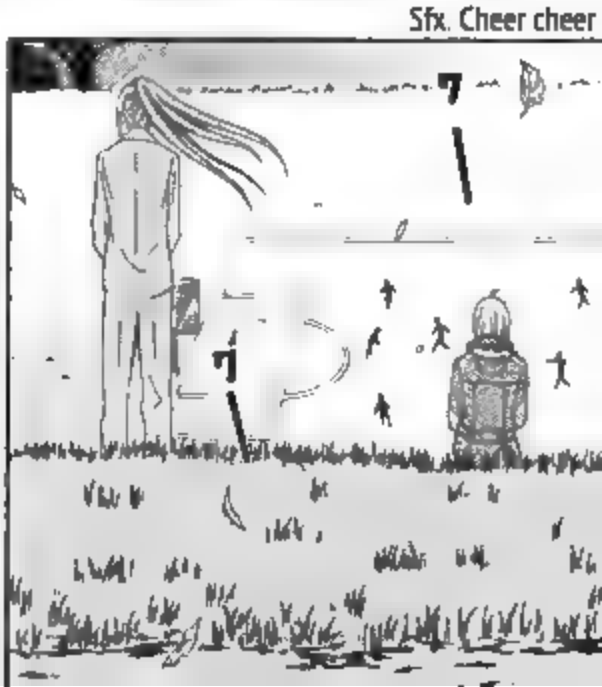
MIGHT LEAD US TO TRAGEDY
LIVING BY THE DECREES OF AN EXISTENCE LIKE THE "TREES" THAT WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND,
EITHER WAY, THEY EACH HAVE THEIR OWN ANSWERS.
MIGHT ALSO LEAD US TO TRAGEDY.
BUT LEAVING THE SAFETY OF OUR MASTERS EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO STAND UP FOR OURSELVES,
IF YOU WANT MY HONEST OPINION,
I'M NOT SURE EITHER.
IS TRAGEDY INEVITABLE, WHATEVER WE DO?
WE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS OUR ONLY OPTION TO REDUCE THE FAR GREATER NUMBER OF CASUALTIES THAT MIGHT RESULT IN THE FUTURE.
IN THE PAST, I BELIEVED THAT IT WAS RIGHT TO DESTROY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND BRING THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" BACK TO LIFE.
FOR THAT CAUSE, WE SACRIFICED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES.

In the end, the lives that were sacrificed,
Will come back to haunt our dreams.
And so, my heart is unsettled,
Unable to assure me whether we made the best decision.
BECAUSE YOU PRIORITIZED YOUR REVENGE, YOU DIDN'T TAKE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO STOP US.
MAHIRO,
DON'T YOU FEEL THE WEIGHT OF ALL THAT GUILT?
EVEN THOUGH YOUR ACTIONS COULD HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES BY MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS.

AND NEITHER DID I BELIEVE I COULD SAVE THE WORLD.
IT'S JUST BECAUSE I'M NOT ARROGANT.
I NEVER BELIEVED I COULD SAVE EVERYONE FROM THE BEGINNING.
Also,
What were those 'most effective measures', anyway?
In the end, my actions might have minimized the number of casualties anyway, no?
I don't really like the sound of that either...
THAT A GUY LIKE YOU MIGHT UN-EXPECTEDLY HAVE BEEN THE MOST CORRECT OF US ALL.
I REALIZE IN RETRO-SPECT THOUGH,
Heh...

REGARDING HOW WE SHOULD VIEW THE TREES AS WE MOVE FORWARD.
IS TO INSTIGATE DISCUSSION AROUND THE WORLD LIKE WHAT WE SAW EARLIER,
IT IS TO DISCERN THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS THAT EXIST ON THE SUBJECT.

Sfx. Cheer cheer



IN THE FIRST PLACE,

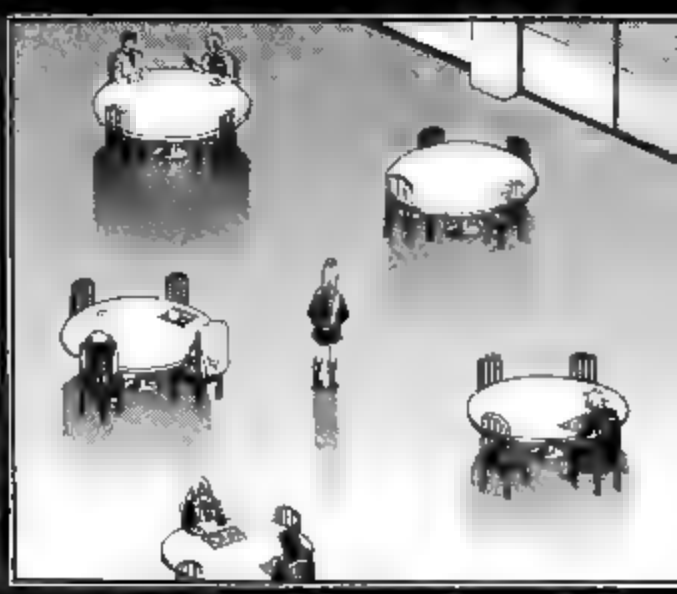
DO WE EVEN KNOW WHAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" REALLY ARE?

THERE MIGHT BE SOME WHO WILL STAND OUT REGARDING WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THEM, NOT BASED ON REASON, BUT ON INTUITION.
THAT AMONG THE BILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW THINKING ABOUT THE TREES,
EXCEPT PERHAPS,
THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN,

SAMON-SAN, I'M SO SORRY!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, JUNICHIROU?
YOU'RE BEING WAY TOO SUDDEN HERE...
?
I MIGHT...
HAVE DONE SOMETHING REALLY, REALLY BAD.

HAKAZE-SAN, ARE YOU REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT. .
DEFEATING THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS"?



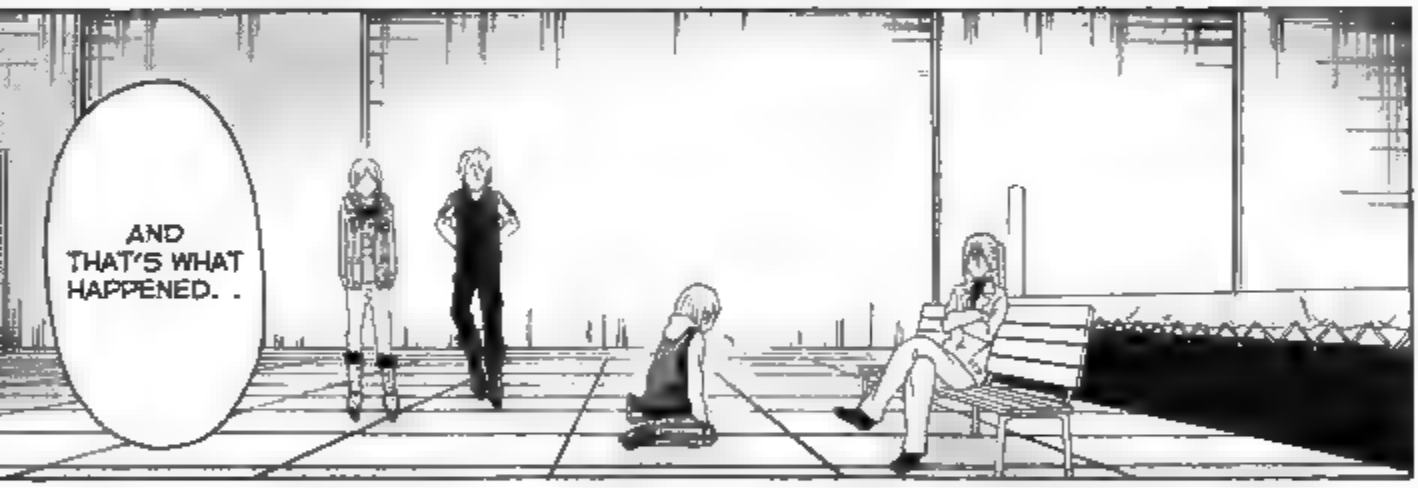
TEST ..?

I'M THINKING OF TEST-ING THIS OUT ON A PART OF THE "TREE OF BEG N-NINGS"
BROTHER JUN

That if I really wanted to defeat the "Tree of Beginnings," it would carry out that wish and be defeated.
I believe that, when the time comes for the "Tree of Beginnings" to awaken... If the future really is entrusted to me,

I SUPPOSE THAT WOULD BE TRUE.
IF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" PROVIDES PROTECTION TO HAKAZE CHAN, THEY'D BE GOOD, RIGHT?
IF THAT IS THE CASE, THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM.
IT WOULD BE CLEAR THAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" IS A RIGHTEOUS GOD.
HOWEVER,
THEN THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WILL IMPEDE US,
AND WILL NOT BE DEFEATED.
IF THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS ENTRUSTING THE FUTURE TO ME,
AS IF ALL OF US ARE ONLY TOOLS TO BE USED TO AWAKEN,
IS NOTHING MORE THAN A FALSE PRETENCE AND THEY ARE MOVING IRRELEVANT OF MY WILL,
A WORLD UNDER THE CONTROL OF SUCH BEINGS,
WOULD BE WRETCHED.
IN THAT CASE, THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WOULD NOT BE A GOD,
BUT A TYRANT THAT MANIPULATES REASON TO ITS OWN ENDS

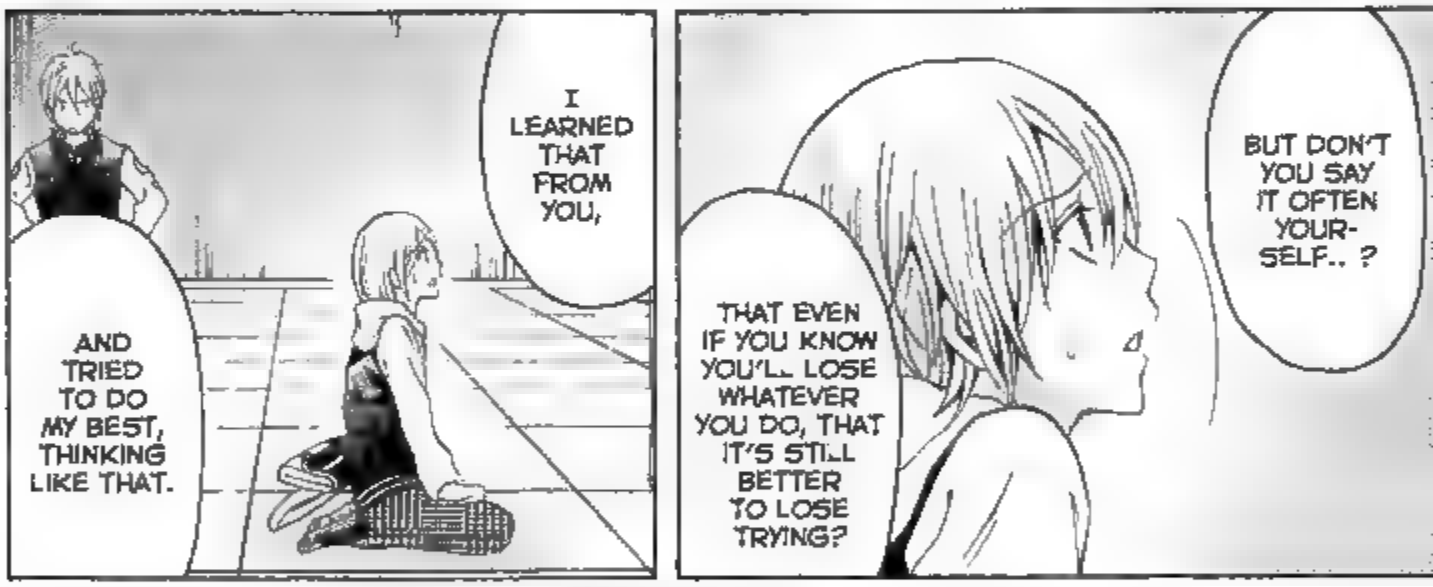
We would then know that we must defeat the "Tree of Beginnings".
TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS" IS JUST OR FOUL.
WITH THIS METHOD, IT WOULD BE EASY,
I'VE DEC DED TO DESTROY THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS".
AND THUS,
:
.
Hakaze-chan...?
Uh...
EITHER WAY, YOU'RE GOING TO DESTROY IT?
BY THAT LOG C, DO YOU MEAN THAT WHETHER THE "TREE OF BEG N-N.NGS" S RIGHT OR WRONG,



T/N One of the kappa's key characteristics is that it likes cucumbers.

I THINK IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE I REALIZED MY LOVE FOR YOSHINO-KUN THAT THIS HAPPENED,
BUT THIS DEVELOP-MENT WAS COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED.

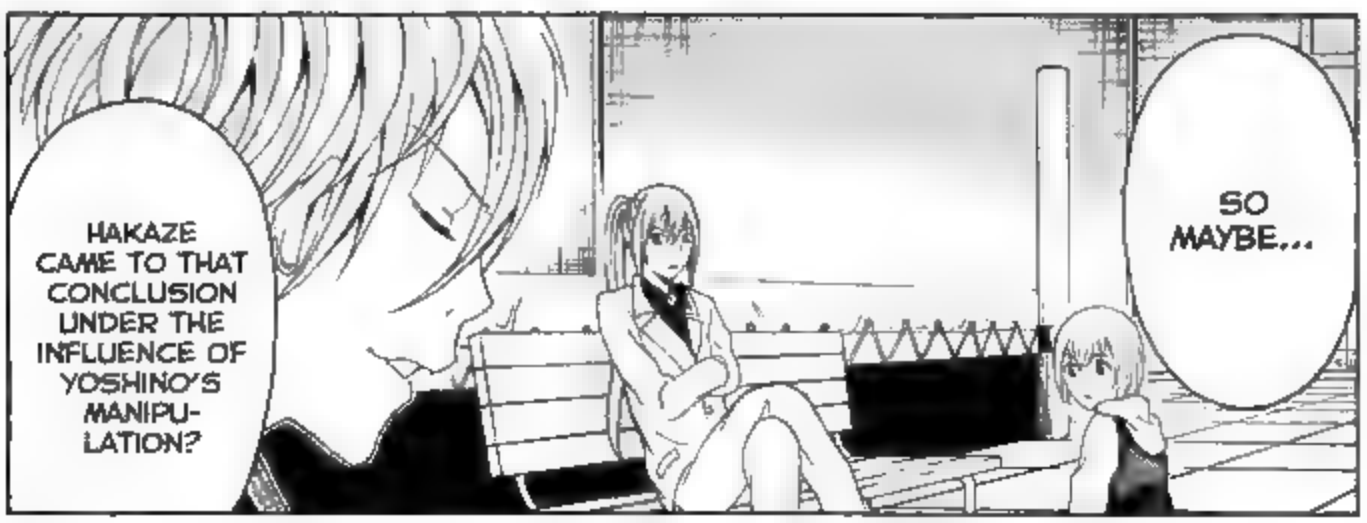
JUN.CHIROU ALSO DID SOME TROUBLE-SOME THINGS, BUT..
I STILL DON'T GET IT...
WHY WOULD IT COME TO THAT, JUST BECAUSE SHE WAS TRYING TO GIVE UP ON HER FEELINGS,
THAT SHE REALIZED WHAT SHE HAD FOR TAKIGAWA YOSHINO?


I LEARNED THAT FROM YOU,
AND TRIED TO DO MY BEST, THINKING LIKE THAT.
BUT DON'T YOU SAY IT OFTEN YOUR-SELF.. ?
THAT EVEN IF YOU KNOW YOU'LL LOSE WHATEVER YOU DO, THAT IT'S STILL BETTER TO LOSE TRYING?

Sfx Heavy

...IN ANY CASE,
IT SOUNDS MORE LIKE WE'RE GOING TO LOSE BECAUSE WE TRIED THOUGH, NO?
IN THIS CASE,
DOESN'T IT MAKE SAMON-SAN'S BELIEF SOUND MISTAKEN?
IF YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT,

THE PRINCESS'S ACTIONS ARE TOO IMPETUOUS.
I HAVE A FEELING THEY'RE TOO UNNATURAL.

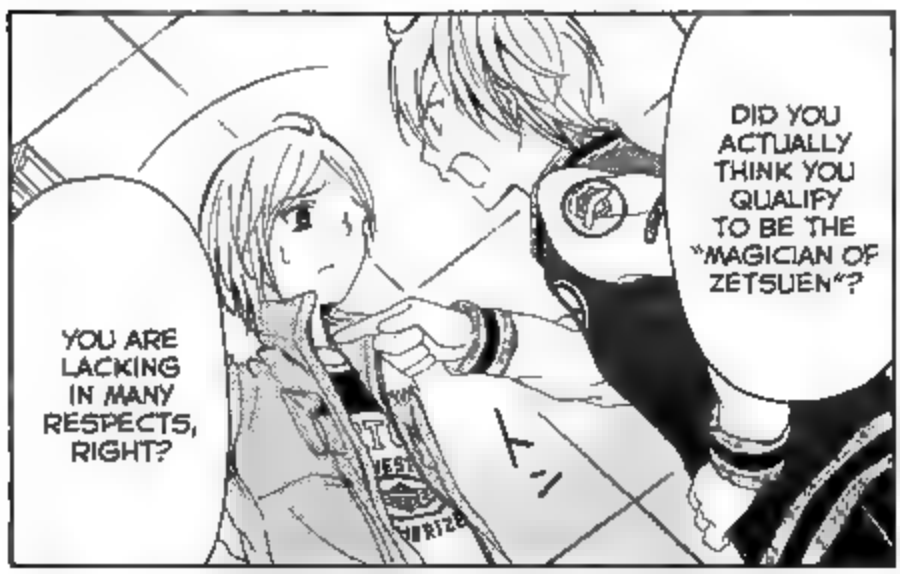

HAKAZE CAME TO THAT CONCLUSION UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF YOSHINO'S MANIPU-LATION?
SO MAYBE...

WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?

Heh...

EEEH ?!
THERE'S ANOTHER "MAGI-CIAN OF ZETSUEN" OTHER THAN ME?!

YOU SUSPECT THAT YOSHINO IS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN," RIGHT?
THAT'S BECAUSE,

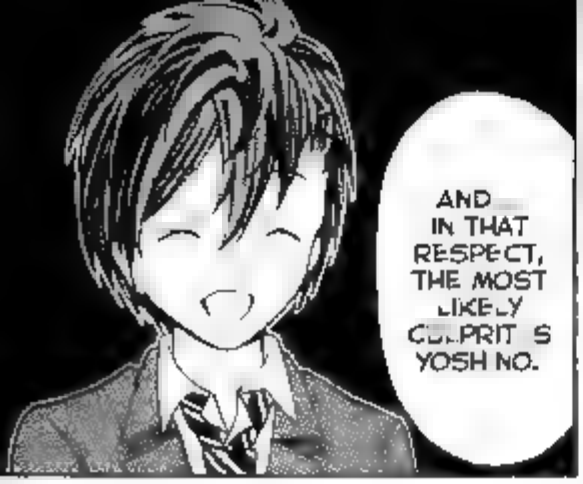

YOU ARE LACKING IN MANY RESPECTS, RIGHT?
DID YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU QUALIFY TO BE THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN"?

RATHER THAN IT BEING ALL ABOUT YOU,

Sfx Poke

YOU MIGHT HAVE BECOME TALENTED AT MAGIC WHILE TRAVELLING AROUND THE WORLD, BUT YOU'RE STILL A LONG SHOT FROM BEING ABLE TO KILL A HUMAN BEING.
AS IT IS, YOU WILL BE PRETTY USE-LESS AS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN".

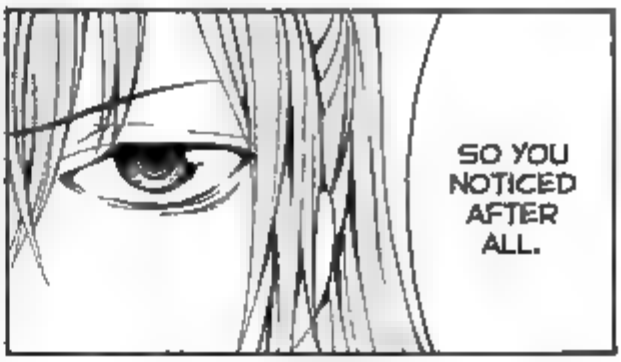
PARTI-CULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRIT.
UGH.


AND IN THAT RESPECT, THE MOST LIKELY CULPRIT IS YOSHINO.

DON'T YOU THINK?

EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO USE MAGIC,
SO THEN ONE WHO IS STRONG IN SPIRIT,
WOULD STILL BE ENOUGH TO HOLD THE "HEART OF ZETSUEN".

AND BECAUSE OF THAT POSSI-BILITY,
I ALSO ASKED MYSELF WHETHER YOSHINO SHOULD BE KILLED.


SO YOU NOTICED AFTER ALL.

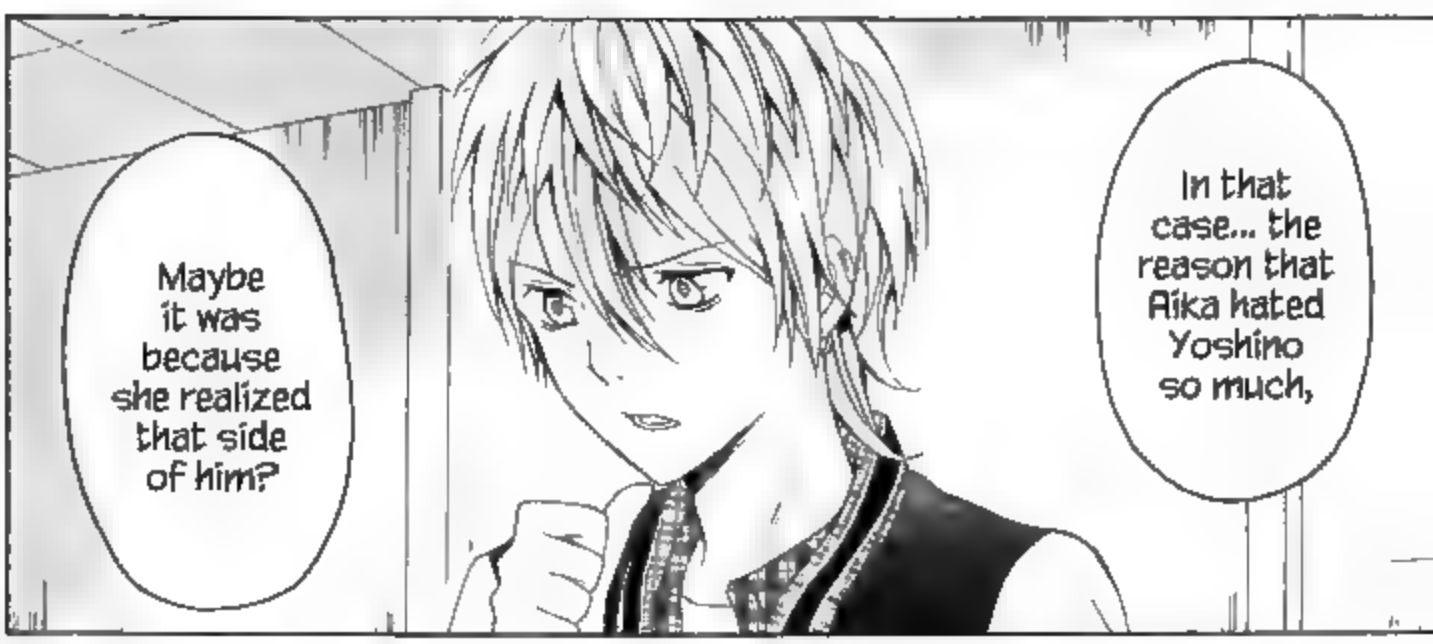
Sfx Step

WELL, I ONLY REALIZED RECENTLY THOUGH.

I ALSO TRIED TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM YOSHINO-KUN AND HAKAZE-SAN,
BUT I WONDER HOW I ENDED UP GETTING CLOSER TO THEM INSTEAD?

AND THAT'S HOW IT IS.

IF YOSHINO-KUN IS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN,"
THEN HIS SCHEMING WOULD HAVE TO BE EXCEEDINGLY PERFECT.


In that case... the reason that Aika hated Yoshino so much,
Maybe it was because she realized that side of him?

I DID.

SHE HATED HIM...
DIDN'T YOU ASK HER THE REASON WHY?

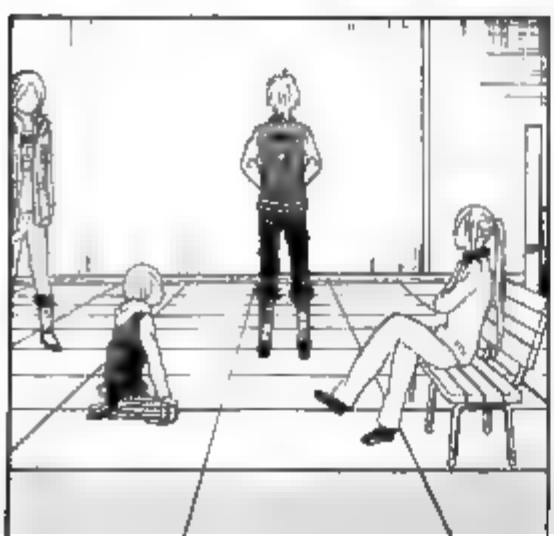
YOU'RE ASKING WHY I HATE HIM?
THAT'S OBVIOUS.
I MEAN, HE'S BEEN ABLE TO REMAIN FRIENDS WITH YOU FOR SO MANY YEARS, MAHIRO.
THERE'S NO WAY A NORMAL HUMAN WOULD BE CAPABLE OF THAT, RIGHT?
.....
THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID...
DOESN'T THAT JUST MEAN,
THAT SHE HATES YOU?

BUT MAHIRO,

Why does this guy get so thick whenever it comes to his sister...?

Huh?
Of course not.

CROSSOVER
THAT'S.. A DIFFE-RENT MATTER.



IF TAKIGAWA YOSHINO WAS REALLY THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN," THERE'S ALSO A POSSIBILITY HE KILLED YOUR SISTER, ISN'T THERE?
ARE YOU ALRIGHT WITH THAT?

IF WE CAN ASSUME THAT THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" IS BAD AND THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" IS GOOD,
THEN WE SHOULD DEFEAT THEM NOW.
BUT IT'S NOT SAFE TO ASSUME ANYTHING GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION.
FOR NOW,
IF HAKAZE REALLY MADE HER DECISION WHILE BEING MANIPULATED,
THEN WE CAN EXPECT A NEGATIVE RESULT.
AT THE VERY LEAST, YOSHINO-KUN WILL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
BUT THIS INCIDENT IS ALSO PARTLY MY RESPONSIBILITY.
IF NECESSARY,
I'LL LEND YOU A HAND IN KILLING YOSHINO-KUN.
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
IF WHAT YOU SAID IS TO BE BELIEVED, WE SHOULD HAVE A PLAN TO COUNTER TAKIGAWA YOSHINO.

LET'S KEEP TABS ON YOSHINO'S GIRL-FRIEND...
.....
SHE IS THE PERSON WHO CURRENTLY HAS THE MOST INFLUENCE.

EITHER HE DIDN'T WANT HER TO GET INVOLVED, OR HE HAS SOME OTHER REASON.
BUT WHAT-EVER THE REASON, THAT'S OUR TRUMP CARD.

YOSHINO HASN'T TOLD ANYONE ABOUT HER EITHER.
UNTIL NOW,

His ideas are so evil!

Hmm...
f we're go'ng to cover for Takigawa Yoshino, that would be about the proper course of action.

A PERFECT HOSTAGE, DON'T YOU THINK?

IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN HE DESERVES TO DIE.
BUT IF YOSHINO-KUN IS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN,"
WON'T HE ABANDON HIS GIRLFRIEND FOR THE SAKE OF HIS AGENDA?
SO YOU THINK SHE WILL BECOME OUR TRUMP CARD?
IF HE DOES, THEN HE'D MAKE A TERRIBLE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN".
THERE WOULD BE NO MERIT IN LEAVING HIM ALIVE.
THEN THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH HER TOO.
AND IF HAKAZE IS ALLYING WITH A GUY AS BAD AS THAT,
IF YOSHINO IS NORMAL, THEN HE WON'T DISREGARD HER.
IT SEEMS AS IF THERE IS A PURPOSE IN HOLDING HER THEN.
I GET IT!

IN THAT CASE,
LET'S HURRY AND FIND OUT WHO EXACTLY YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND IS.

OKAY.

VERY WELL.

The four of us trying to figure out who Yoshino's girlfriend might be...
This is a pretty strange situation, isn't it...?

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

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Chapter 26 - Mind Your Own Business

UGH
UH
STARTING A FIGHT WITH ME AS I AM NOW
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

EH?
YOSHINO HAS A GIRL-FRIEND?
VIDE
BUT REALLY, TO HEAR THAT EVEN TAKIGAWA HAS A GIRL-FRIEND, IT'S A BIT OF A SHOCK.
I USED TO THINK IT WASN'T MEANT TO BE FOR HIM..
Fuwa?!
Ah!
AH.. UH. YEAH.
WHEN I WAS LEAVING HE WAS ALONE IN THE CLASSROOM..
.....
.....
HEY! DIDN'T TAKIGAWA SAY NOT TO TELL ANYONE.
Ah!
HE KEPT STARING AT HIS CELL PHONE.. WHEN I LOOKED FROM BEHIND,
IT LOOKED LIKE A MESSAGE FROM HIS GIRLFRIEND ABOUT SOME DATE PLANS.
THERE WAS A PICTURE TOO, BUT I DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK!

VIDEO DVD
YOU GUYS SHOULD FORGET ABOUT T, TOO.
AHH... I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.
IF HE WANTS TO HIDE IT, HE MUST HAVE HIS REASONS...
I see...
I see...
So Yoshino has a girl-friend...
Not bad...

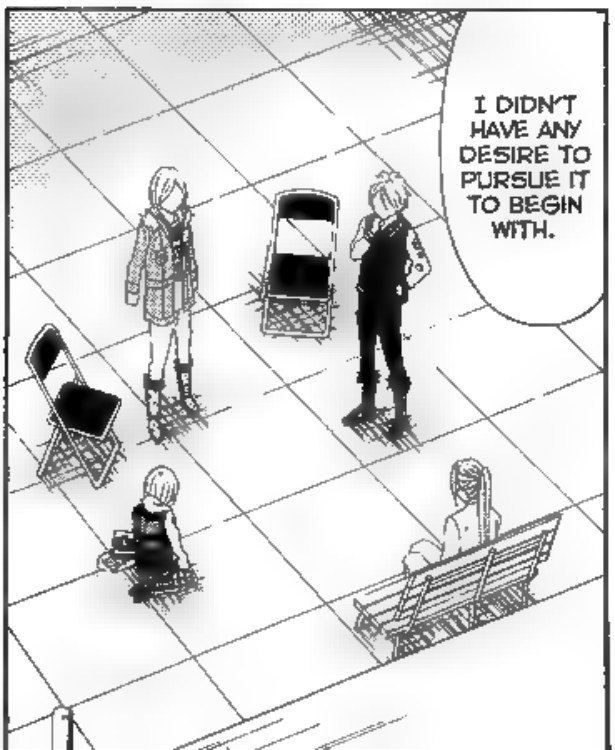
WHEN I FIRST FOUND OUT THAT YOSHINO HAD A GIRL-FRIEND.
AND THAT WAS...

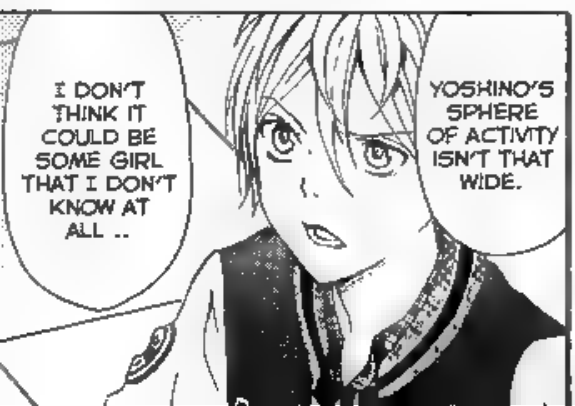
NOTHING AT ALL.

AND THEN AFTER-WARDS...
WHAT ELSE DID YOU LEARN ABOUT "HER"?

A MONTH AFTER THAT...
I PICKED UP THE BOTTLE WITH HAKAZE'S DOLL INSIDE, AND I HARDLY HAD TIME FOR THAT ANYMORE..

THERE REALLY IS...
QUITE LITTLE INFORMATION REGARDING YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND, HUH.


I DIDN'T HAVE ANY DESIRE TO PURSUE IT TO BEGIN WITH.

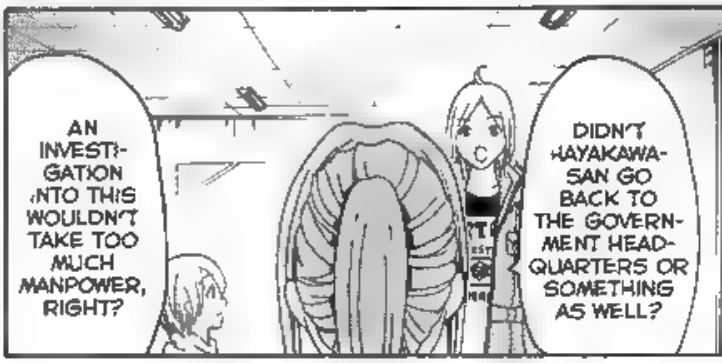

YOSHINO'S SPHERE OF ACTIVITY ISN'T THAT WIDE.
I DON'T THINK IT COULD BE SOME GIRL THAT I DON'T KNOW AT ALL ..

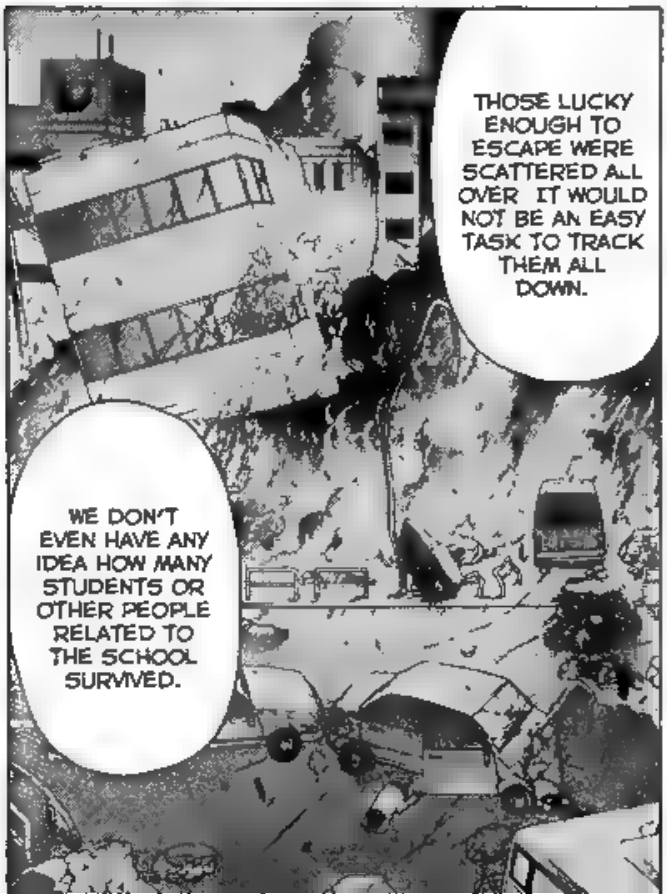
WOULDN'T IT SAVE US A LOT OF EFFORT, IF WE ASKED HIS CLASS-MATES FROM BACK THEN,
OTHER PEOPLE IN HIS SCHOOL, OR EVEN HIS PAR-ENTS?
IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER THAN JUST BLINDLY GUESSING AROUND.

UMM...
SO THEN...

I MORE OR LESS KNOW WHAT HE LIKES, TOO..

EVEN IF WE WANTED TO INVESTI-GATE...


AN INVESTI-GATION INTO THIS WOULDN'T TAKE TOO MUCH MANPOWER, RIGHT?
DIDN'T HAYAKAWA-SAN GO BACK TO THE GOVERN-MENT HEAD-QUARTERS OR SOMETHING AS WELL?


THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO ESCAPE WERE SCATTERED ALL OVER IT WOULD NOT BE AN EASY TASK TO TRACK THEM ALL DOWN.
WE DON'T EVEN HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY STUDENTS OR OTHER PEOPLE RELATED TO THE SCHOOL SURVIVED.

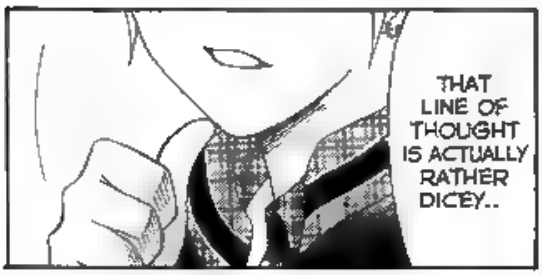
THE "FRUIT OF EXODUS" HAS ALREADY FLOWN OVER THE AREA WHERE MAKIRO AND TAKIGAWA LIVED BEFORE..
AND EVERY-THING WAS DESTROYED BY THE IRON SICKNESS.

THAT MEANS...
MORE-OVER..
TAKIGAWA'S PARENTS MOST LIKELY DIED IN THAT CHAOS AS WELL...
EVEN HAYAKAWA WOULD BE PRETTY HARD-PRESSED TO CHASE DOWN INFORMATION FROM THE INVOLVED PARTIES.
Makiro-kun and Yoshino-kun... their parents, friends, acquaintances, and hometowns...
They lost everything and yet they're still pressing on?
There's no way I would be able to act so normally, if it were me...
They're just a little too calm, aren't they?
WE MAY VERY WELL HAVE TO RELY ON HAYAKAWA'S INVESTIGATIVE POWERS IN THE END, BUT..
IT WOULD CERTAINLY PAVE THE WAY IF WE TRIED OUR BEST ON OUR END TO PIN DOWN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND, RIGHT?
Or is it just me that's that pitiful?
Uh

FOR A HIGH-SCHOOLER, A GIRLFRIEND SHOULD BE EITHER A STUDENT FROM THE SAME SCHOOL,
OR AT MOST, A FEMALE STUDENT FROM A MIDDLE SCHOOL OR HIGH SCHOOL NEARBY, RIGHT?

IT SEEMS LIKE YOSHINO IS STILL IN TOUCH WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, SO. .
IF WE CAN PIN THINGS DOWN, I THINK IT'D BE EASY TO FIND HER WITH A LITTLE WORK.

.....


THAT LINE OF THOUGHT IS ACTUALLY RATHER DICEY..

IN SPITE OF THINGS, YOSHINO WAS ACTUALLY QUITE WELL-KNOWN AT SCHOOL..
THERE WAS GOSSIP ABOUT HIM AT NEARBY SCHOOLS, TOO.

SO THAT JUST MAKES THE NUMBER OF CONTACTS INCREASE, HUH?

HOW MANY POINTS OF CONTACT ARE THERE,
BETWEEN TAKIGAWA YOSHINO AND SUCH A FEMALE STUDENT?

NO, I SAY "WELL-KNOWN", BUT..
NOT IN A GOOD WAY.
IF HE WAS TALKED ABOUT EVEN AT OTHER SCHOOLS,
THEN IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SURPRISING FOR THERE TO HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF GIRLS WHO WERE INTERESTED OR WANTED TO CONFESS TO HIM.
WELL, IT IS PARTIALLY MY FAULT...
HEY, MAHIRO...
AT TIMES LIKE THAT, YOU SHOULD RUN.
Ouch

WHY DO YOU ATTRACT SO MUCH HATRED, I WONDER...
PLUS... WEREN'T THEY ONLY JUST ACTING TOUGH?
"AT TIMES LIKE THAT", YOU SAY... THERE WERE ONLY TEN-ODD OPPONENTS WEREN'T THERE?
IT'D BE BAD IF IT GOT UP TO THE 20'S...
WHAT AN EYESORE TO RETURN HOME TO..
DON'T YOUR FINAL EXAMS START TOMORROW?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU REALLY WENT ALL-OUT.
DID YOU GET IN A FIGHT SOMEWHERE AGAIN?

AH, OF COURSE NOT.
SO, HOW MANY WERE THERE?
NORMALLY, YOU'D AVOID FIGHTING EVEN IF IT WASN'T BEFORE A TEST.
IS IT FORBIDDEN TO HAVE A GOOD FIGHT BEFORE A TEST?
I DIDN'T START IT, OK?
A FIGHT ISN'T ABOUT NUMBERS.
THAT'S A NUMBER WHERE IT'D BE BETTER TO RUN.
UM...
15 PEOPLE.
IT WAS A CAKEWALK EVEN IF WE WERE SURROUNDED.
PLUS, YOSHINO WAS THERE TOO.
TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THAT, HALF OF THE REMAINING ONES COULD BE TAKEN CARE OF.
EVEN IF THERE ARE MORE THAN 10 PEOPLE LEFT, THEY HAVE TO AT LEAST FLINCH A LITTLE.
IF YOU TAKE OUT 3 PEOPLE IN A FLASH,

I JUST DID WHAT I HAD TO, SINCE MAHIRO DRAGGED ME INTO IT!
EH? I'M A VICTIM!
IN OTHER WORDS,
IT WAS ALL YOSHINO-SAN'S FAULT.
I COULDN'T JUST ABANDON MAHIRO LIKE THAT, COULD I/
YOU SHOULDN'T LET YOURSELF GET DRAGGED INTO IT.
YOU'RE BETTER OFF RUNNING AWAY BY YOURSELF
ARE YOU STUPID?
IF YOU WERE TO RUN, MAHIRO WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING, AND HE'D RUN AS WELL.
HOW COWARDLY OF YOU TO TRY PLAYING THE VICTIM!
JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT
YOSHINO LOOKS PATHETIC ENOUGH, DON'T YOU THINK?

REALLY NOW
YOU REALLY ARE STRICT WITH YOSHINO, HUH?
BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE HIM.
IT'S FINE, MAHIRO.
IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS NEW.
YOU SHOULDN'T SAY THAT RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.
IT'S NOT JUST AT MY MIDDLE SCHOOL, YOSHINO-SAN...
YOU HAVE THE WORST REPUTATION AMONG OTHER SCHOOLS, TOO.
EVEN WORSE THAN MAHIRO.
YOUR REPUTATION AMONGST GIRLS IS THE WORST, TOO.
RUMORS AND REPUTATION ARE FINE, BUT..
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING...

"IF IT WEREN'T FOR TAKIGAWA YOSHINO, FUWA MAHIRO WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED OR TAKEN IN BY THE POLICE LONG AGO."
EVERYONE SAYS IT.
GIVES MAHIRO A WORSE REPUTATION, DOESN'T IT?
THAT...
HOW-EVER...
THEY'RE UNEXPECT-EDLY POPULAR, EVEN.
THEY ARE ACTUALLY ADMIRED
PEOPLE LIKE MAHIRO HAVE A WILD AND DANGE-ROUS APPEAL

A LITTLE RAT LIKE YOU, YOSHINO-SAN, SNEAKILY SAYING SLY LITTLE THINGS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES...
WHO LIKES THAT?

SORRY.
Little...
Little rat...

YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET INTO OUR HIGH SCHOOL AT LEAST, RIGHT?
IT'S NOT THAT EASY TO GET INTO THE TOP SCHOOL IN OUR PREFECTURE, YOU KNOW...
DON'T BE IN A BAD MOOD JUST BECAUSE OF FINALS.
I'M TAKING ENTRANCE EXAMS THIS YEAR.
I JUST GOT BACK FROM GRINDING AWAY, STUDYING AT THE LIBRARY
I JUST WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING DISAGREEABLE.
I'M RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF FINALS, SO YOU'VE GOT ME AT A BAD TIME.

I SEE...
YOU'RE AT THE LEVEL WHERE YOU STILL HAVE TO STUDY FOR TESTS, HUH...
ARE YOU,
REALLY THAT STUPID?
YOSHINO-SAN, PLEASE TELL HIM.
THAT I'M CORRECT.
ALTHOUGH HE HAS NEVER STUDIED FOR A TEST, HE'S USUALLY FIRST IN THE CLASS.
EVEN FOR OUR HIGH SCHOOL, HE ENTERED AS THE TOP-STUDENT, SO DON'T THINK OF HIM WITH YOUR STANDARDS.
MAHIRO.

WELL, NORMALLY IF YOU LISTEN IN CLASS AND READ THE TEXTBOOK, YOU'LL BE FINE, RIGHT?
YOU GUYS ARE TOO STUPID.
EVEN SO IT'S ONLY THE BAD RUMORS ABOUT YOU THAT ARE SPREAD AROUND, YOSHINO-SAN.
YOUR TEST SCORES ARE ALL OVER THE PLACE, RIGHT?
YOU TAKE THE TOP GRADES WITH SUCH LITTLE EFFORT ..
THAT'S WHY YOU MAKE ENEMIES.
HEY, I GET AVERAGE GRADES.
YOU REALLY DO THINK SMALL, HUH.
A LITTLE RAT, WITH AVERAGE GRADES.
So there you have it... it's not just me...
But all the girls around here don't like you, Yoshino-san.

IT'D BE TOUGH FOR YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND TO BE A GIRL FROM ONE OF THE NEARBY MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOLS.
AND THUS...
AND OF COURSE, IN REALITY, YOSHINO IS THE OPPOSITE OF THE RUMORS.
AFTER HEARING THAT KIND OF GOSSIP, A GIRL WOULD REALLY HAVE TO BE QUITE STRANGE TO WANT TO DATE YOSHINO..
AFTER-WARDS, I HEARD THAT KIND OF GOSSIP TOO.
SO A GIRL LIKE THAT WOULD LEAVE HIM PRETTY QUICKLY EVEN IF SHE DATED HIM.
THE GIRL-FRIEND SHOULD BE A MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT...
BUT THERE WASN'T ANYONE LIKE THAT AROUND US...
IN OTHER WORDS. .
TAKIGAWA YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND IS SOMEONE WHO ISN'T BOTHERED BY GOSSIP,
AND HAS SEEN THROUGH TO HIS TRUE SELF?

YOU KNOW, YOU...
Mahiro-kun is strangely conside-rate...
Intro-duce?
TO GIRLS THAT DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIS REPU-TATION...
WHICH IS WHY I TRIED TO INTRO-DUCE HIM,
BE RACKING HIS BRAINS OVER THE IDENTITY OF SOMEONE'S GIRLFRIEND LIKE THIS?
WOULD THE MAIN CHARAC-TER IN A MANGA,
YOU'RE LIKE THE MAIN CHA-RACTER IN A MANGA!
PLUS, YOU'RE GOOD AT FIGHTING AND POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS...
YOU'RE WELL-KNOWN IN YOUR AREA, THE ONLY SON OF A WEALTHY FAMILY, AND YOU'RE SMART. .
WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOSHINO?
DURING THE MONTH THAT I WAS SLEEPING...
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...
Hm

THAT'S RIGHT, HUH...
DID YOU SEE OR HEAR ANYTHING THAT MIGHT BE A CLUE?
HE MUST HAVE HAD CONTACT WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND DURING THAT TIME, RIGHT?
THERE'S A CHANCE THEY MAY HAVE TAKEN REFUGE SOMEWHERE, BUT..
I'D LIKE YOU TO BE PREPARED FOR THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO AS WELL.
TAKIGAWA YOSHINO-KUN.
UNFORTUNATELY, WE STILL CANNOT CONFIRM WHETHER OR NOT YOUR PARENTS ARE ALIVE.

YES.
I UNDER-STAND.
ALSO...
YOU HAD A G.RL-FRIEND, CORRECT?
HOW ARE THINGS ON THAT END?
SHOULD WE LOOK .NTO HER AS WELL?
I'M ALREADY .N CONTACT WITH HER.
I SENT HER TALISMANS TO PROTECT AGA.NST THE IRON SICKNESS IN ADVANCE.
AND WE DECIDED ON A MEANS OF GETTING IN TOUCH .F WE COULDN'T REACH EACH OTHER BY PHONE.
THOSE ARE RATHER METICULOUS PREPARA-TIONS.
I KNEW THEY WERE NECESSARY
AFTER I GOT INVOLVED IN ALL OF THIS..

MORE-OVER...
IF I WERE TO THOUGHT-LESS..Y REVEAL INFORMATION ABOUT HER,
SHE WOULD BECOME MY WEAKNESS, AS WELL.
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, I KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT MAGIC AND THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AT THIS POINT, RIGHT?
THERE'S NO WAY I'D BE ALLOWED TO RETURN JUST LIKE THIS, CORRECT?
?...
YOUR COOPERA-TION WI..L NOT BE FORCED FROM NOW ON.
IT CAN'T BE.
THE PRINCESS IS QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT YOU.

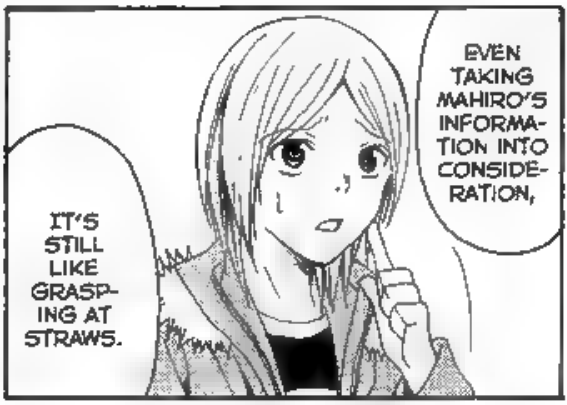
WELL, AS EXPECTED.
I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE, UNDER THESE CIRCUM-STANCES.
IF WE DID SOMETHING TO YOU OR FUWA MAHIRO JUST BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T COOPERATE,
THERE'S NO TELLING HOW ANGRY SHE'D BE.
THAT'D BE BAD, WOULDN'T IT?
ぽん
HOW-EVER...
AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, IT'D BE BEST IF OUR ACTIVITIES WERE UN-RESTRICTED.
LET'S LEAVE THINGS AT THAT, AS FAR AS MY GIRLFRIEND IS CON-CERNED.
FOR NOW, SHOULDN'T WE THINK ABOUT,
JUST HOW LONG WE'RE GOING TO LET MAHIRO KEEP SLEEPING?
.....

WE DIDN'T HAVE THE MANPOWER TO INVESTIGATE IT IN SECRET, AFTER ALL.
WE DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANY NEED TO EITHER.

SINCE THEN,
WE HAVEN'T TOUCHED UPON THE TOPIC OF TAKIGAWA YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND.

WE DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE ANY CARELESS ACTIONS IN REGARDS TO HIM.
IN ADDITION,

THAT'S NOT TRUE.


EVEN TAKING MAHIRO'S INFORMATION INTO CONSIDERATION,
IT'S STILL LIKE GRASPING AT STRAWS.

THAT NARROWS THINGS DOWN QUITE A BIT, DON'T YOU THINK?

THEY WERE ABLE TO GET IN TOUCH SO SOON AFTER THE CHAOS...
AND UNDER SAMON-SAN'S AND MAHIRO-KUN'S RADAR TOO.
SHE'S QUITE THE UNDERSTANDING GIRLFRIEND...
SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE OBJECTED TO YOSHINO AND HAKAZE-CHAN TRAVELING TOGETHER...

ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOSHINO'S JUST BEEN TALKING ABOUT AN IMAGINARY GIRLFRIEND?
DON'T LUMP HIM TOGETHER WITH YOURSELF

UMM...I WONDER...
IF HE REALLY HAS A GIRLFRIEND TO BEGIN WITH...

I'VE NEVER TALKED ABOUT AN IMAGINARY GIRLFRIEND!

.....

IF HE'S BEEN HIDING THIS GIRLFRIEND EVEN FROM YOU, THE ONE CLOSEST TO HIM...
DON'T YOU FIND IT STRANGE?

HOWEVER..

THEN HE MUST HAVE HAD COMPELLING REASONS TO HIDE IT
LIKE SOMEONE THAT WOULD BE EMBARRASSING FOR YOU TO KNOW ABOUT, OR SO FORTH.

HIS LIKES ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM MINE.
AND FIRST OFF, I WOULDN'T DO THAT

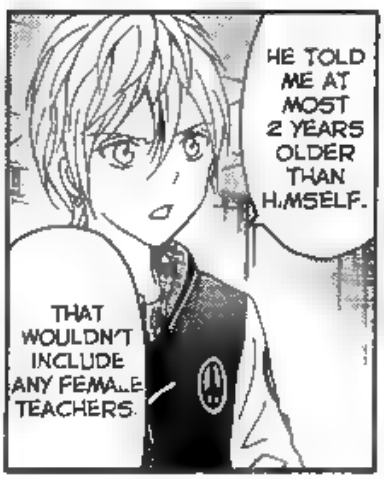
MAYBE HE WAS AFRAID YOU'D STEAL HER?

IT SEEMED UNSOLVABLE, BUT IT'S REALLY NOT, RIGHT?

IF THAT WERE THE REASON,
THEN YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRLFRIEND WOULD BE SOMEONE THAT YOU KNOW, MAHIRO-KUN.

IF HIS GIRLFRIEND WERE ONE OF THE FEMALE TEACHERS AT SCHOOL, IT WOULD BE HARD TO TALK ABOUT IT, EVEN WITH FRIENDS.
MAYBE HE WAS HIDING IT FOR THE SAKE OF APPEARANCES.

THEN, OTHER PEOPLE THAT WOULD BE PRO-BLEMATIC FOR A HIGH SCHOOL BOY TO DATE...
ARE THERE ANY OTHERS?


HE TOLD ME AT MOST 2 YEARS OLDER THAN HIMSELF.
THAT WOULDN'T INCLUDE ANY FEMALE TEACHERS.

DOES YOSHINO-KUN LIKE OLDER WOMEN?

.....
.....
HOW ABOUT A MARRIED WOMAN?
Everyone's being serious...
But it seems like we're missing the point.
I wonder if...
That Divine Tree could do something under these circumstances.

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
FRAULEIN-DONO?

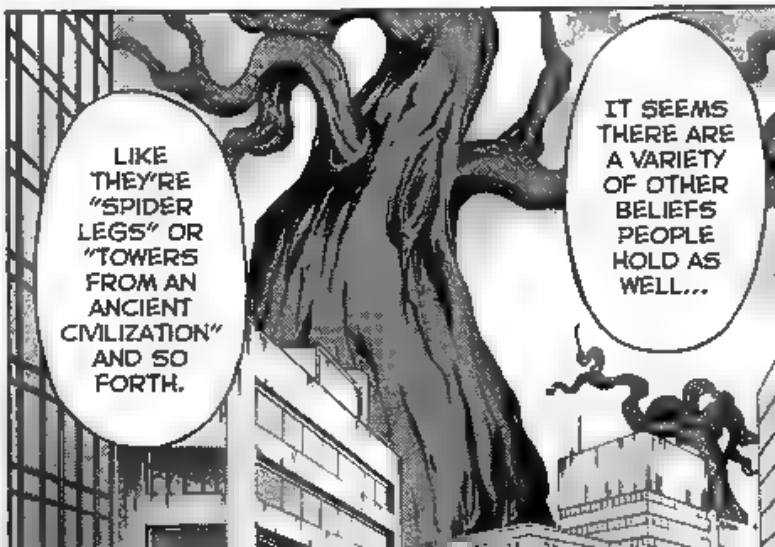
YUP...
THEY REALLY ARE "TREES" ...

AFTER ALL,
THEY ARE PART OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS."

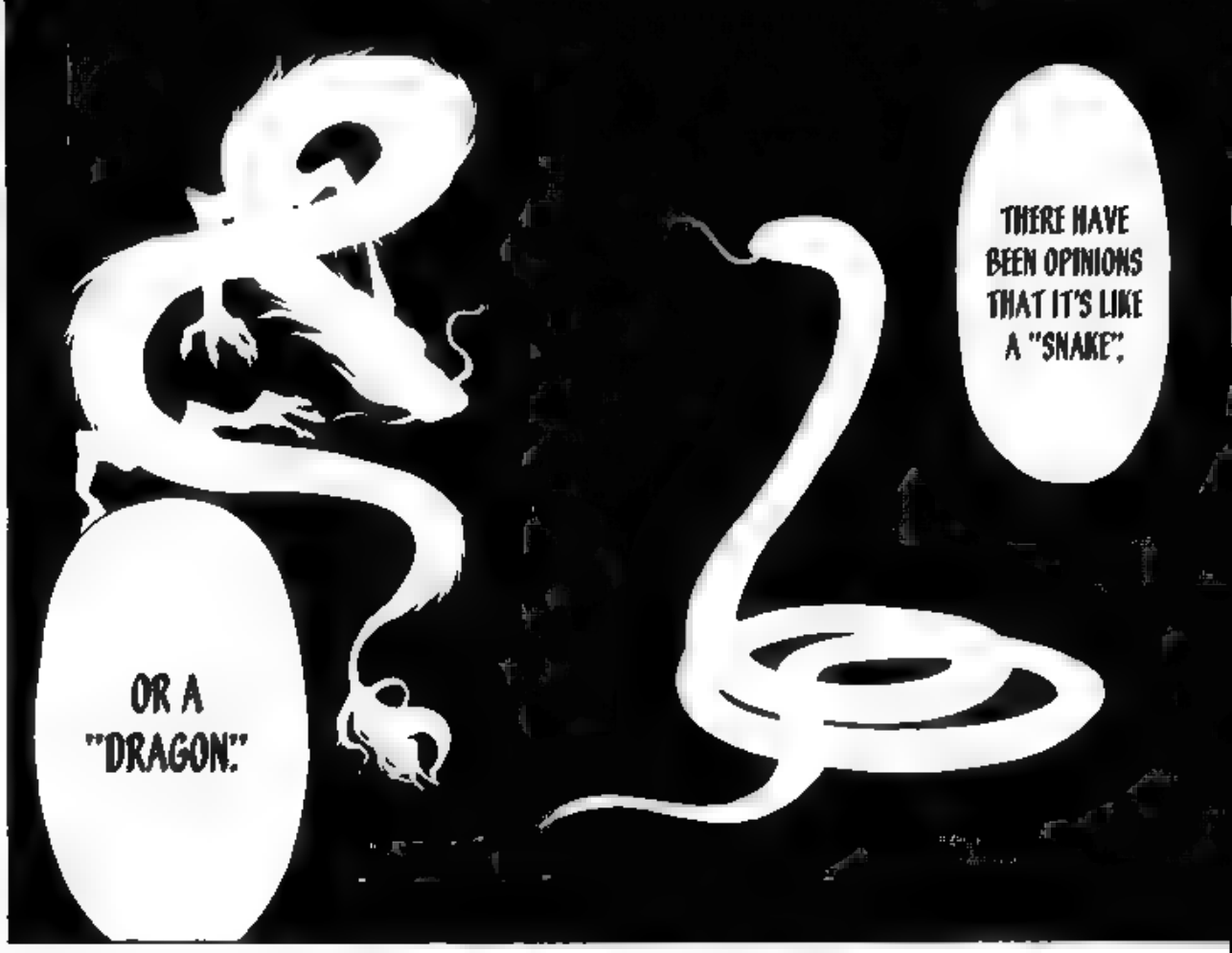
HUH?

NATSU-MURA-KUN.
THOSE REALLY LOOK LIKE TREES, DON'T THEY.

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR A "TREE" TO BE RECOG-NIZED AS A GOD-LIKE PRESENCE.

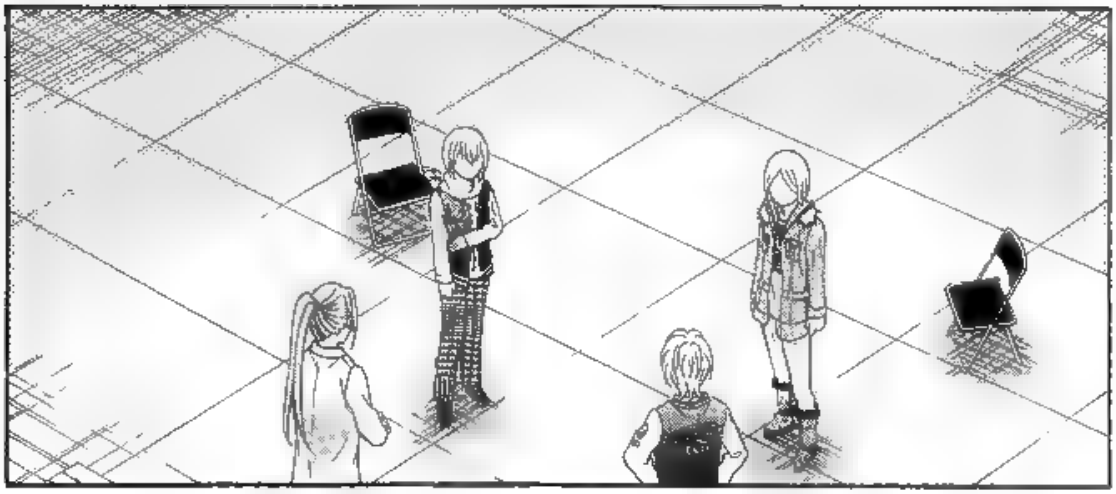

LIKE THEY'RE "SPIDER LEGS" OR "TOWERS FROM AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION" AND SO FORTH.
IT SEEMS THERE ARE A VARIETY OF OTHER BELIEFS PEOPLE HOLD AS WELL...

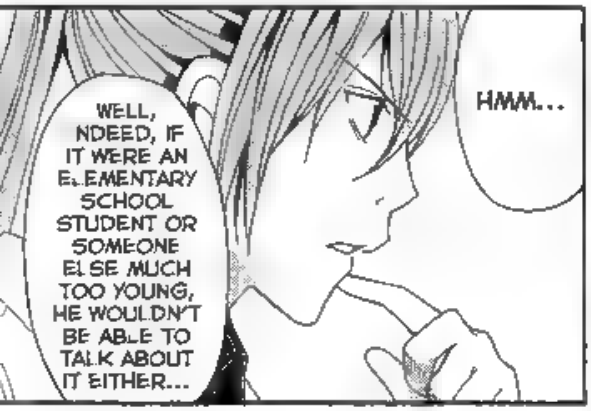
SO IF YOU CAN THINK OF THAT AS A "DIVINE TREE" AS WELL
IT'S QUITE EASY TO ACCEPT, BUT...
EVEN IN JAPAN, THERE ARE USUALLY A COUPLE HOLY TREES IN SHRINES.
LIKE YGGDRASIL FROM GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY,
OR THE TREE OF LIFE FROM CHRISTIANITY.
PERHAPS YOU MIGHT CATCH ON TO WHAT IT REALLY IS.
IF YOU WERE TO THINK OF IT INSTEAD AS "SOMETHING RESEMBLING A TREE"
RECENTLY, ON THE INTERNET AND AMONGST RESEARCHERS..
HUH...
"SOMETHING"... LIKE WHAT, FOR EXAMPLE?


THERE HAVE BEEN OPINIONS THAT IT'S LIKE A "SNAKE".
OR A "DRAGON."

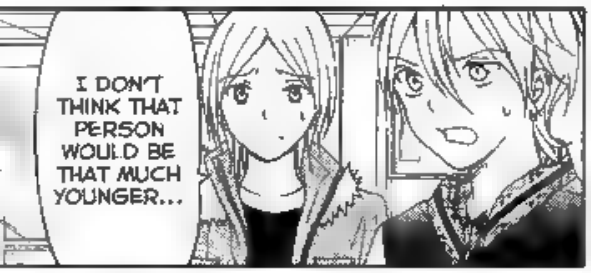
A SNAKE...
OR A DRAGON...?

YUP... AFTER ALL, SNAKES AND DRAGONS...
WERE ALSO ONCE CONSIDERED GODS...

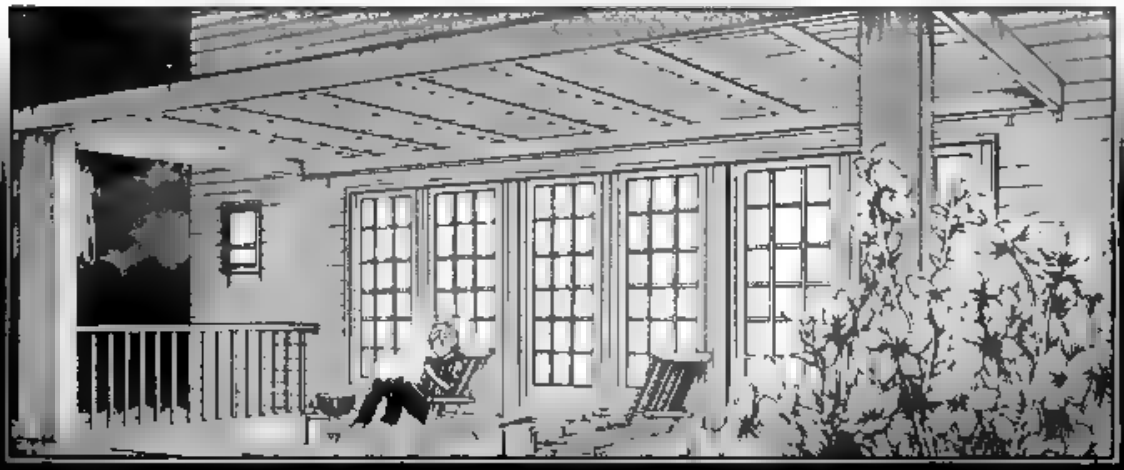



HMM...
WELL, INDEED, IF IT WERE AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT OR SOMEONE ELSE MUCH TOO YOUNG, HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT IT EITHER...

WE'VE ONLY BEEN THINKING OF OLDER WOMEN, BUT ..
MAYBE WE SHOULD THINK OF YOUNGER GIRLS AS WELL?


I DON'T THINK THAT PERSON WOULD BE THAT MUCH YOUNGER...

AIKA SAID IT AS WELL, BUT...
YOSHINO WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DATE A GIRL WHO DIDN'T POSSESS QUITE A BIT OF POWER...



COULD IT BE...
THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO INTRODUCE A GIRL TO YOSHINO-SAN AGAIN?

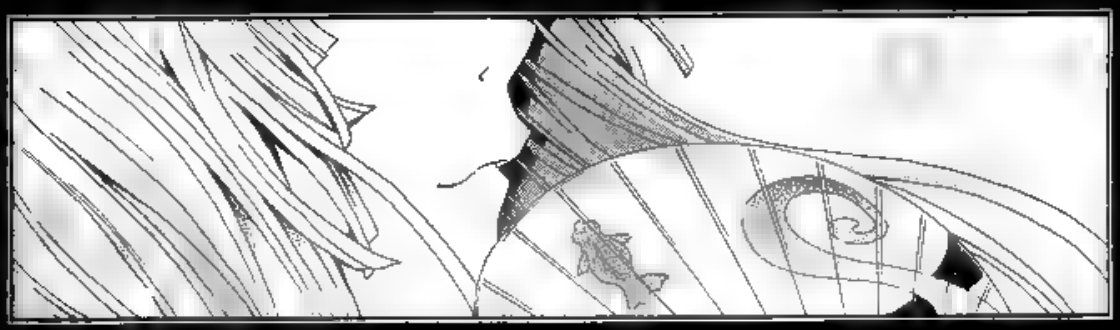
YUP.
I THINK HE'D BE HAPPY TO FIND A GIRLFRIEND BEFORE SUMMER VACATION ENDED.
I THINK IT'S A LOST CAUSE.
I DON'T THINK THAT THERE'S ANYONE WHO COULD DATE YOSHINO-SAN,
AMONGST YOUR ACQUAINTANCES, MAHIRO.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
I KNOW SOME COLLEGE GIRLS FROM GOOD SCHOOLS...
"I WANT TO TRY PICKING YOUR CLAVICLE WITH CHOPSTICKS."
YOSHINO WOULD SAY SOMETHING WARPED LIKE THAT.
THERE'S NO WAY A COLLEGE GIRL FROM A GOOD SCHOOL WOULD BE ABLE TO STAND HIM.
YOUR IMAGE OF YOSHINO IS WARPED BY YOUR SPITE.
IT'S NOT WARPED AT ALL.
THAT PERSON WOULD DEFINITELY SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

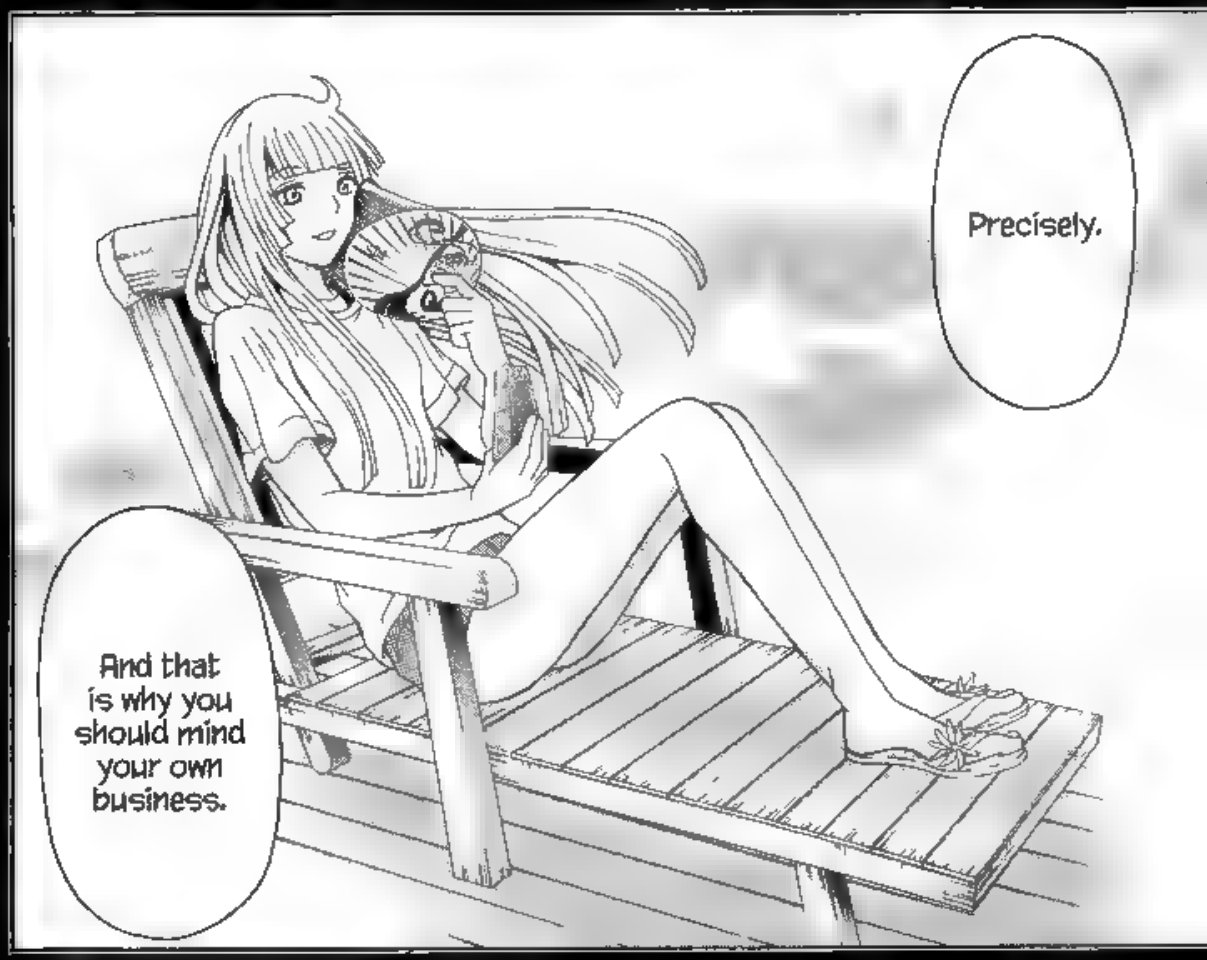
LISTEN...
カチ
カチ
NO MATTER HOW ABSURD OR UNREASONABLE THE SITUATION, HE CAN IMMEDIATELY RESPOND IN A NORMAL FASHION,
BUT HE IS UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING EXTREME.
HE WILL NEVER ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE SITUATION ON HIS OWN.
TO PUT IT NICELY, YOSHINO-SAN HAS HIGH ADAPTABILITY.
TO PUT IT BADLY, HE HAS NO INDIVIDUALITY.
HE DOESN'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO ATTRACT WOMEN
WHICH IS WHY...
NORMAL GIRLS WOULD BEG-OFF ON SUCH A DIRECTIONLESS PERSON, RIGHT?
HE'S THE TYPE THAT NEEDS TO BE LED.

SO...
WELL...
THAT'S HOW HE'S ALWAYS BEEN...
THE ONE WHO DATES YOSHINO,
WOULD BE SOMEONE LIKE YOU, MAHIRO.
YOSHINO-SAN IS PERFECTLY SUITED,
FOR SOMEONE LIKE THAT
WILLFUL AND EGOTIS-TICAL,
WANTING EVERYTHING YOUR WAY.
NO COM-PUNCTION ABOUT MANIPU-LATING PEOPLE... ACTING LIKE ROYALTY

Because no matter what happens to him,
Yoshino would definitely stand on your side.
Heh
so...

AMONG YOUR ACQUAIN-TANCES, MAHIRO...
ARE THERE ANY SUCH HIGH-HANDED, HAUGHTY WOMEN?
.....
THERE AREN'T, RIGHT?
YOU HATE THAT KIND OF PERSON, DON'T YOU?
AFTER ALL, YOU MUST HATE PEOPLE WHO ARE THE SAME TYPE AS YOU THE MOST.
I DON'T HATE THEM.
I JUST DON'T HAPPEN TO KNOW ANY GIRLS LIKE THAT.
BUT IF I JUST LEAVE H.M BE .
FINDING YOSHINO-SAN A G RLFRIEND IS A FUTILE QUEST
JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE.
DOESN'T IT SEEM L KE HE'LL NEVER GET A GIRL-FRIEND?




Precisely.
And that is why you should mind your own business.

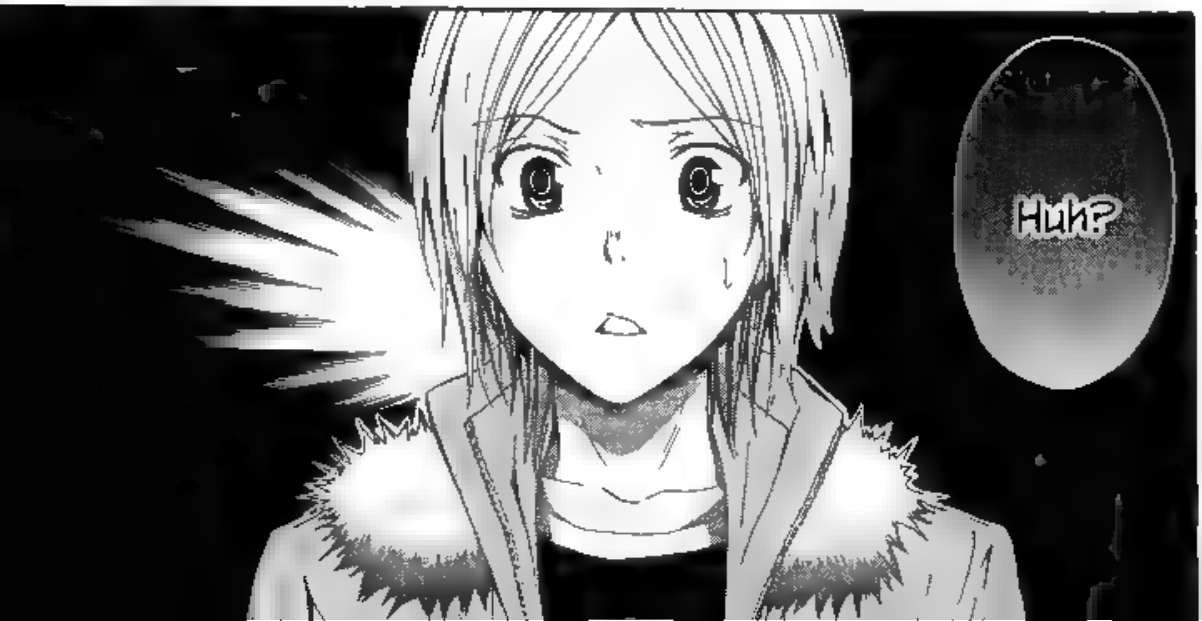
SO IN ANY CASE, A WOMAN CAPABLE OF DOING ANYTHING, BUT WHO WANTED PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT NONETHELESS...
YOSHINO WOULD BE SUITED FOR SOMEONE LIKE THAT.

SO A GIRL THAT COULD ATTRACT YOSHINO..
I GUESS IT REALLY COULDN'T BE AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLER

.....

IF IT'S THAT KIND OF TRAIT,
THEN INDEED, I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY THE PRINCESS WOULD LIKE HIM.

TO PUT IT THE ANOTHER WAY...
IT WOULD BE A GIRL SIMILAR TO THE PRINCESS, THEN...


Huh?

Just because I don't know

Does that mean that there's no possibility at all?

Wait...
Is everyone purposefully trying to ignore that possibility?

WHAT IS IT?

UMM...
COULD I?

BASED ON WHAT I'VE HEARD...
YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRLFRIEND COULD ONLY BE ONE PERSON...

ONE PERSON...
WHO IS IT?

IT'S AIKA-SAN.
YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRLFRIEND IS YOUR LITTLE SISTER, ISN'T IT, MAHIRO-KUN?

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

WE HAVE BEEN USING
"TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND
"TREE OF ZETSUEN" THROUGHOUT
THE LIFETIME OF THIS PROJECT,
BUT IT SEEMS THAT THE OFFICIAL
ANIME SUBS HAVE OPTED FOR
"TREE OF GENESIS" AND
"TREE OF EXODUS."

SO WE DECIDED TO STICK WITH
THE OFFICIAL ANIME NAMES.

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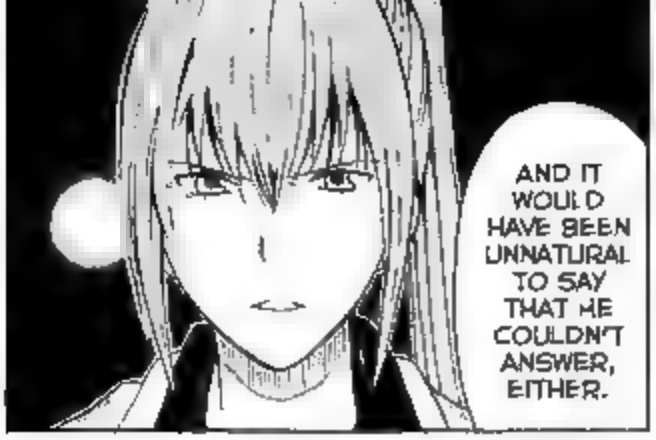
Chapter 27 - Dancing Girl

YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRL-FRIEND,
IS YOUR LITTLE SISTER, ISN'T IT, MAHIRO-KUN?

M

ER... YEAH...
AIKA...
IS YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND, YOU SAY?
BUT... THINK ABOUT IT!
BUT THAT WOULD ALSO BE QUITE INTEREST-ING...
THAT'D BE INCRE-DIBLY UN-EXPECTED IF IT WERE THE CASE.
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO.
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
.....
IF A KA-SAN WAS HIS GIRL-FRIEND,
THEN OF COURSE YOSHINO-KUN WOULD HIDE THE FACT THAT HE HAD A GIRLFRIEND FROM YOU, RIGHT?!
A LOT OF THINGS WOULD MAKE SENSE IF THAT WAS THE CASE, WOULDN'T IT?

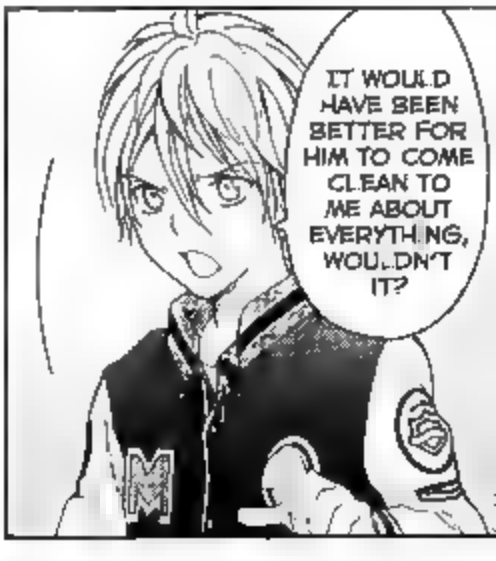

AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNNATURAL TO SAY THAT HE COULDN'T ANSWER, EITHER.

THAT'S RIGHT ..
FROM TAKIGAWA YOSHINO'S POSITION,
IF HE HAD SAID THAT HE HAD A GIRLFRIEND, THEN HE DEFINITELY WOULD HAVE BEEN ASKED WHO IT WAS.

AND THUS, IF HE HID THE FACT THAT HE HAD A GIRLFRIEND FROM THE VERY BEGIN-NING,
THEN IT WOULDN'T BECOME AN ISSUE AT ALL.

.....

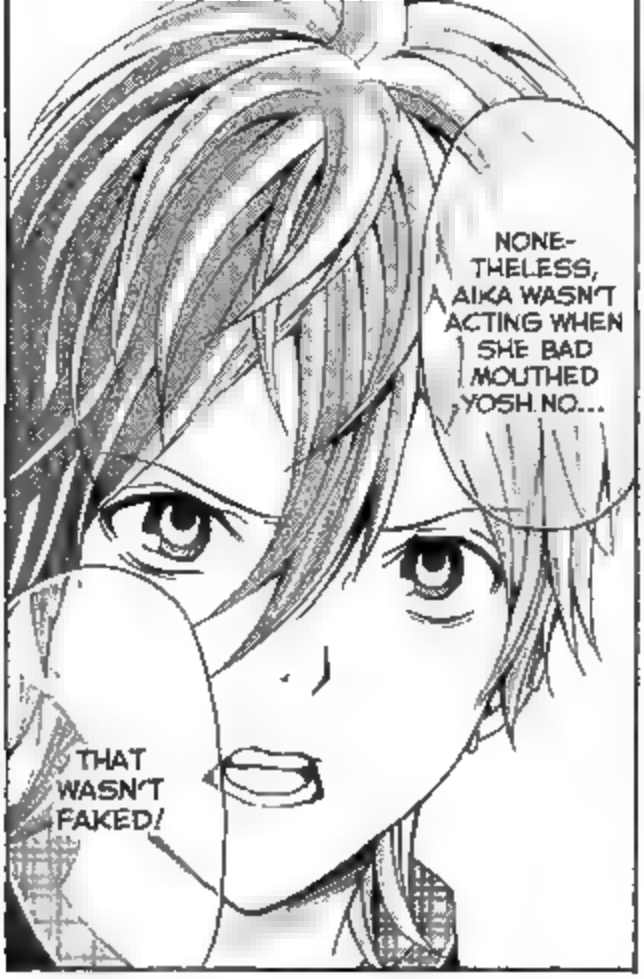
IF HE HAD TOLD YOU EVERY THING,
IT WOULD HAVE BECOME INCREDIBLY TROUBLE-SOME, DON'T YOU THINK?


IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR HIM TO COME CLEAN TO ME ABOUT EVERYTHING, WOULDN'T IT?

YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND IS STILL ALIVE, RIGHT?
HE SAID THAT HE WAS STILL IN TOUCH WITH HER...

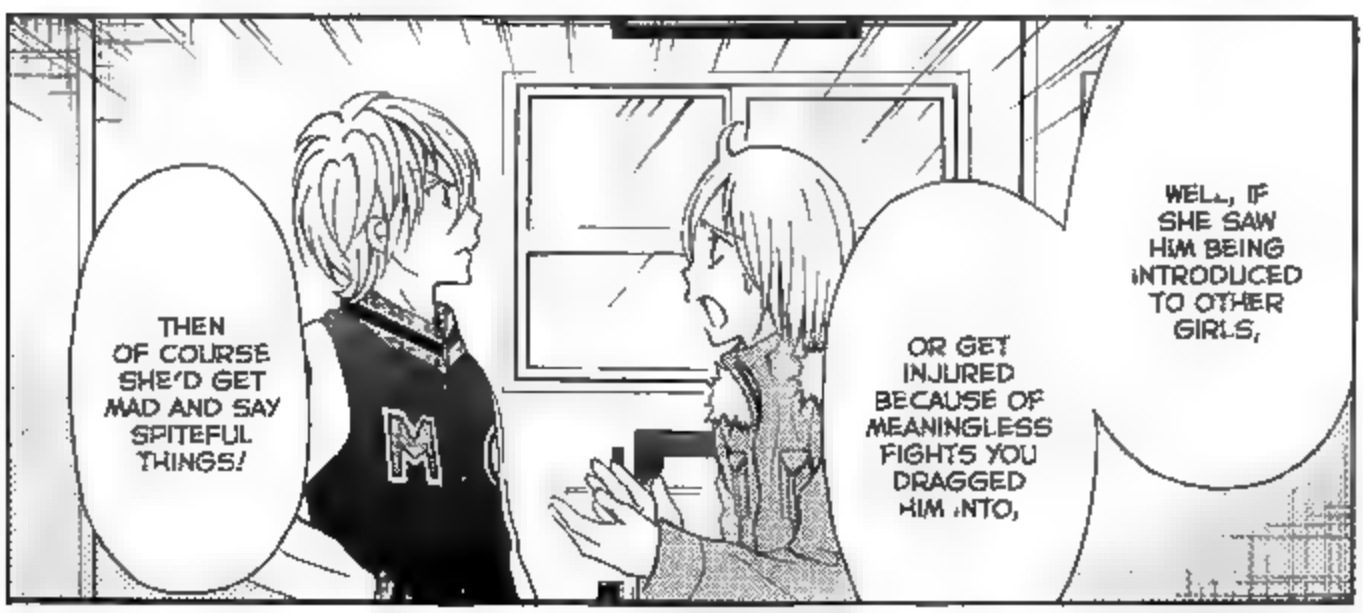
HOWEVER,
AIKA DIED OVER A YEAR AGO...

EVEN SO!
THAT WAS JUST YOSHINO-KUN TALKING.
NO ONE ELSE HAS EVEN HEARD HIS GIRL-FRIEND'S VOICE BEFORE, RIGHT?
COULDN'T HE JUST HAVE BEEN MAKING US THINK THAT HIS GIRL-FRIEND WAS ALIVE,
SO THAT NO ONE WOULD SUSPECT?
AND IF AIKA, WHO DIED A YEAR AGO, WAS HIS GIRLFRIEND, THEN THERE'D BE NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT HER GETTING DRAGGED INTO THE MESS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE TREES...
THERE'S NO WAY THAT SAMON-SAN AND HIS PEOPLE WOULD BE ABLE TO FIND HER EVEN IF THEY INVESTIGATED.
IN ADDITION, EVEN IF HE WERE TO TRAVEL WITH THE PRINCESS,
THERE WOULD BE NO COMPLAINTS FROM THE DEAD, EITHER


NONE-THELESS, AIKA WASN'T ACTING WHEN SHE BAD MOUTHED YOSH.NO...
THAT WASN'T FAKED!

THEY WERE ON BAD TERMS, RIGHT?
THERE'S NO WAY THAT AIKA AND YOSH.NO WERE DATING.

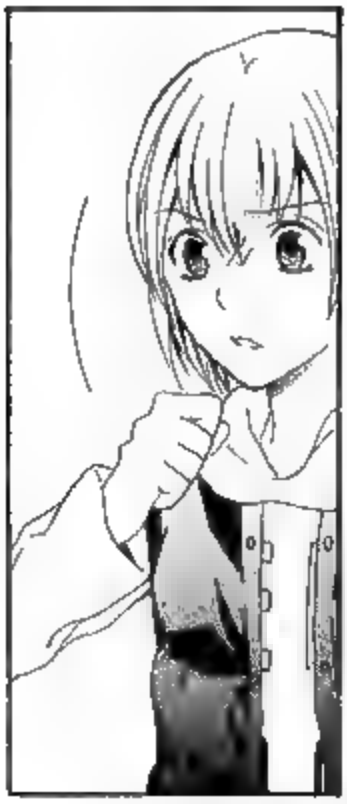
SO THAT YOU WOULDN'T SUSPECT!
THEY WERE JUST PRE-TENDING TO BE ON BAD TERMS.


THEN OF COURSE SHE'D GET MAD AND SAY SPITEFUL THINGS!
OR GET INJURED BECAUSE OF MEANINGLESS FIGHTS YOU DRAGGED HIM INTO,
WELL, IF SHE SAW HIM BEING INTRODUCED TO OTHER GIRLS,

AIKA-SAN WASN'T BOTHERED BY GOSSIP.
SHE SAW THROUGH TO WHO YOSHINO-KUN REALLY WAS, DIDN'T SHE?

MORE-OVER,

YOSHINO-KUN'S TRUE SELF...
IS HE REALLY SOMEONE YOU WOULD DISLIKE ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM?
DON'T YOU THINK SHE WOULD HAVE JUST DISLIKED HIM ONCE SHE KNEW HIS TRUE SELF?
.....



Did he really think that his sister, Aika-san, would have no interest at all in someone like that?
The way that someone like Mahiro-kun trusts and relies on Yoshino-kun, and talks about him so proudly...

Does Mahiro-kun really not realize it?

...WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

ACCORDING TO YOU, MAHIRO-KUN,
AIKA-SAN WAS STRONG-WILLED AND SELF-POSSESSED, RIGHT?

BACK AT MT. FUJI...
TAKIGAWA YOSHINO SAID THAT HE KNEW WHO FUWA AIKA'S BOYFRIEND WAS...

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, SHE WAS WILLFUL AND EGOTISTICAL,
SOMEONE PERFECTLY SUITED TO BE YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRLFRIEND, RIGHT?

IF IT WAS ACTUALLY HIMSELF,
THEN OF COURSE HE WOULD KNOW WHO IT WAS.
WHEN AIKA DIED, YOSHINO DIDN'T CHANGE IN ANY PARTICULAR WAY.
HE WAS FINE WHEN HE CAME ALONG TO VISIT HER GRAVE, TOO.
CALM DOWN...
THERE'S NO WAY AIKA AND YOSHINO WERE GOING OUT, RIGHT?
IF THEY HAD BEEN GOING OUT, THERE'S NO WAY THAT WOULD BE THE CASE, ISN'T THAT SO?
ISN'T HE THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO FAKE THAT?
AFTER ALL, FOR YOUR SAKE, EVEN NOW HE COULDN'T VERY WELL SAY THAT HE HAD BEEN GOING OUT WITH AIKA-SAN, RIGHT?

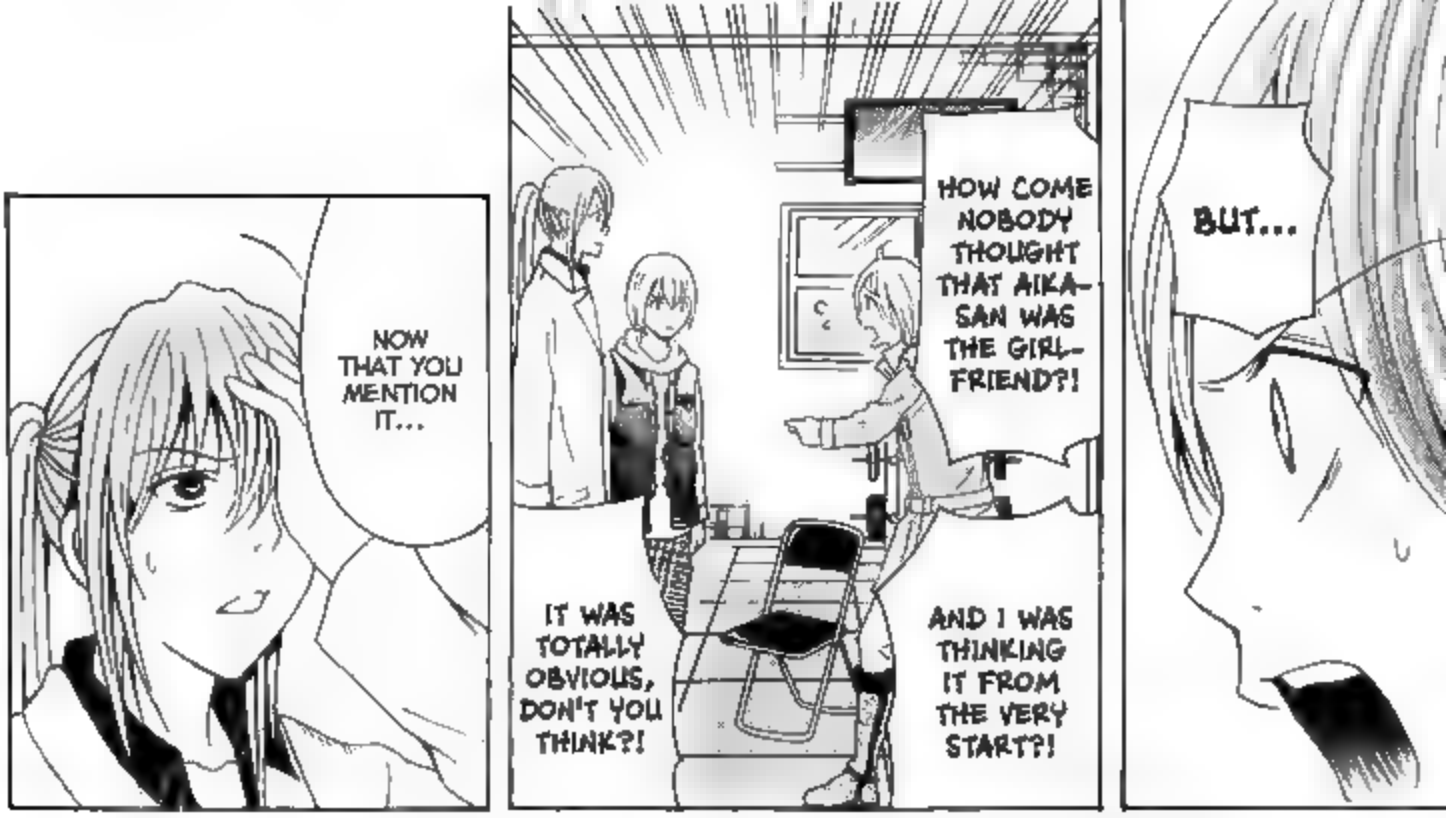
GETTING MIXED UP IN MAGIC AND THIS MESS WITH THESE GIANT TREES ALL OF A SUDDEN,
AND EVEN LOSING YOUR PARENTS, FRIENDS, AND THE TOWN THAT YOU LIVE IN.
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU TWO ARE TOTALLY FINE WITH ALL OF THAT.
YOU MIGHT BE MAD AT ME FOR SAYING THIS,
BUT BOTH YOU AND YOSHINO-KUN REALLY ARE ABNORMAL UNDER THESE CIRCUM-STANCES.
IT'S AS IF...
PRIOR TO THIS HAPPENING, YOU LOST SOMETHING EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.
IT'S AS IF YOUR FEELINGS WERE NUMBED LONG AGO...

不破家之墓

IF AIKA-SAN WERE YOSHINO-KUN'S GIRL-FRIEND,
THEN EVERY-THING COMES TOGETHER, HUH...

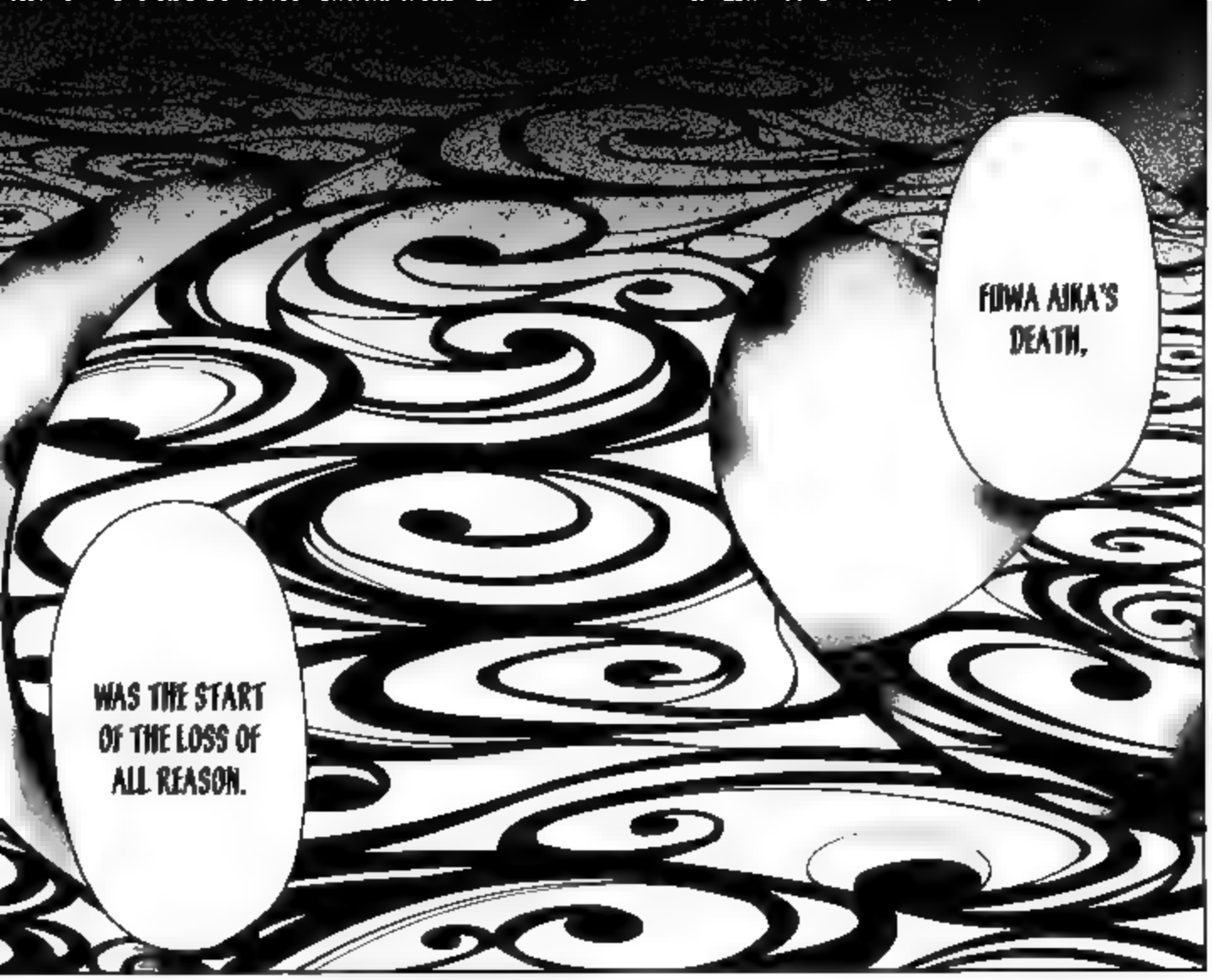
OVER

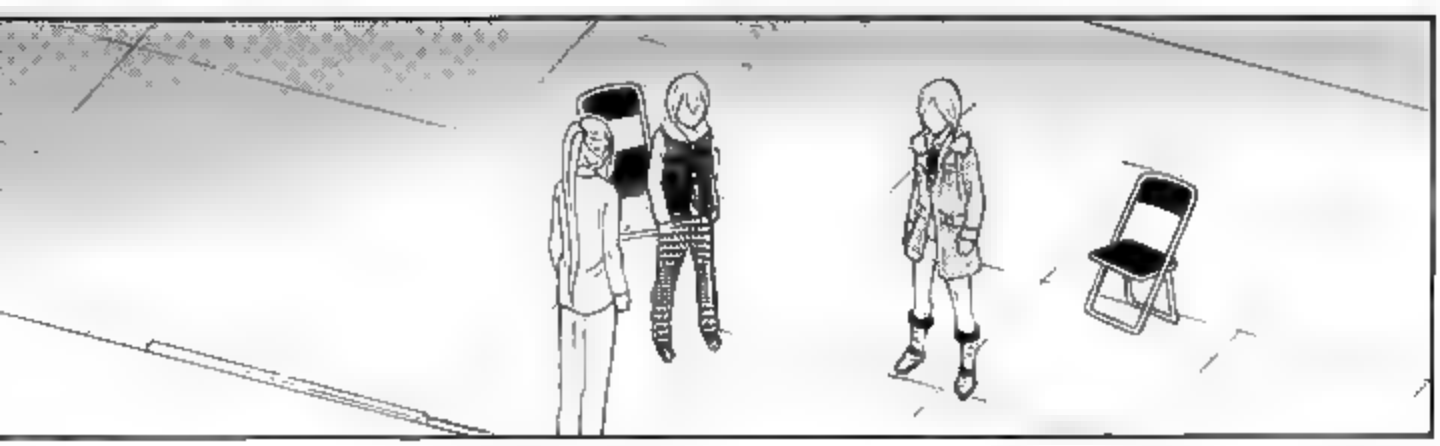
LET ME THINK ABOUT THIS CAREFULLY.
I...
DID I TOUCH UPON SOME-THING I SHOULDN'T HAVE?
YOU DIDN'T JUST TOUCH IT.
YOU GAVE IT A SWIFT KICK IN THE BEHIND...


NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
HOW COME NOBODY THOUGHT THAT AIKA-SAN WAS THE GIRL-FRIEND?!
IT WAS TOTALLY OBVIOUS, DON'T YOU THINK?!
AND I WAS THINKING IT FROM THE VERY START?!
BUT...

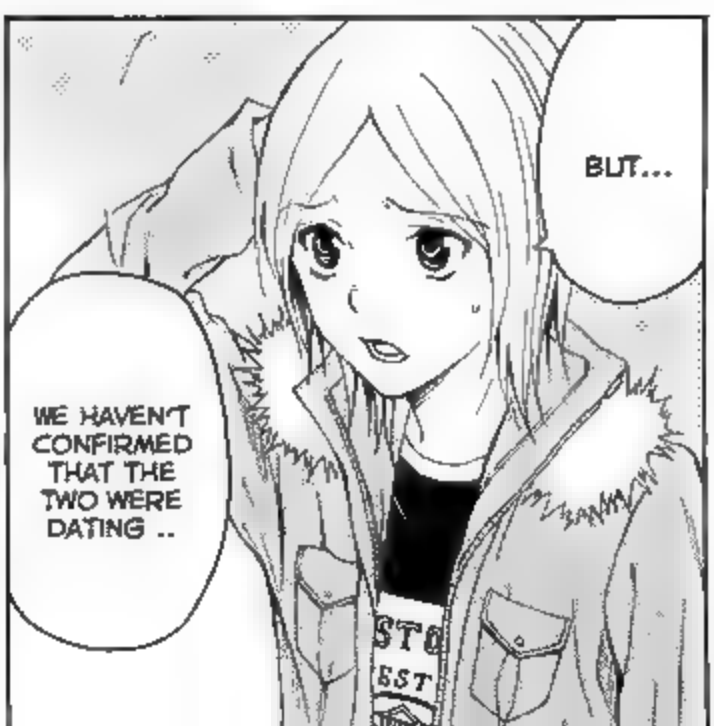
OUTRAG-EOUS...?
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?
IF YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND WAS A.KA-SAN, THEN THINGS WOULD REALLY BECOME OUTRAG-EOUS.
SO MAYBE WE WERE UNCON-SCIOUSLY AVOIDING IT...

IT'S AS IF...
IT WOULD BE OUT-RAGEOUS BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.
IT FEELS LIKE ANY-THING AND EVERYTHING WILL FALL APART
THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL. NO WAY AT ALL.


FUWA AIKA'S DEATH,
WAS THE START OF THE LOSS OF ALL REASON.



THERE'S DEFINITELY A DECENT CHANCE THAT WE MIGHT BE WRONG, AFTER ALL.
YEAH.


BUT...
WE HAVEN'T CONFIRMED THAT THE TWO WERE DATING ..

Eh!?
So it turns out Yoshino-kun's girlfriend was Aika-chan?!

HERO
3R

WAH... THIS IS BAD...

MAHIRO-KUN WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT ALL OF A SUDDEN AND COOPED HIMSELF UP IN HIS ROOM.
SO I WAS WONDER-ING WHAT HAPPENED, BUT...

IT'S A LONG STORY..
AH..

HERO
38

JUDGING BY YOUR REACTION ...
YOU KNEW?

SHOULD WE TELL MAHIRO-KUN ABOUT THIS AS WELL?
SO WHAT DO WE DO?
NO.
LET'S LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE WITH MAHIRO.
SO WITH THIS,
IT'S CONFIRMED THAT FUWA AIKA AND TAKIGAWA YOSHINO WERE DATING, HUH...

OR HOW HE WOULD REACT...
IF IT WERE CONFIRMED, THEN WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WOULD THINK,
CROSSOVER

MAYBE EVEN AS WE SPEAK HE'S ABOUT TO GO CONFRONT YOSHINO-KUN AND CONFIRM THINGS FOR HIMSELF...
BUT IS IT OK TO LEAVE MAHIRO-KUN BY HIMSELF?

THAT'S RIGHT, IF IT'S NOT CONFIRMED, THEN...
SOMEWHERE INSIDE HIM, THE HOPE THAT "THAT'S NOT THE CASE" WILL REMAIN AND HE WON'T MAKE ANY RASH MOVES.

PLUS, HE'S NOT THE TYPE TO DO SUCH IRRATIONAL THINGS.

I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED THIS TO MAHIRO, SO HE SHOULDN'T DO ANY-THING OUT OF HAND.
EVEN IF HE WERE TO ESCAPE, THERE ARE DEVICES IN THE CITY THAT WILL ENSURE THAT HE WILL BE CAPTURED QUICKLY

I'VE PLACED A TRACKER INSIDE MAHIRO.
USING MAGIC,

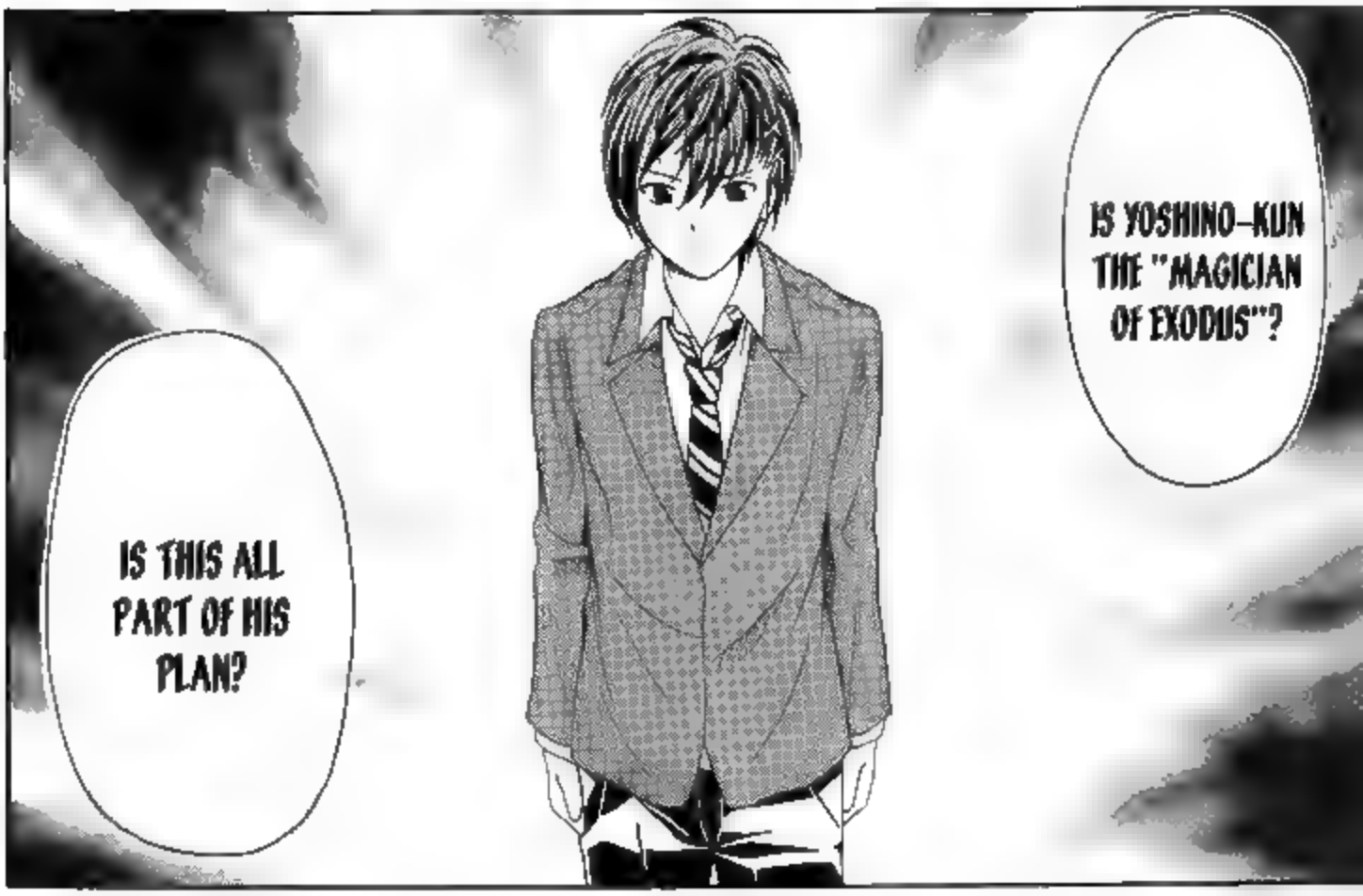
IT MIGHT BE SCARIER TO GET CON-FIRMATION..
FOR HIM,

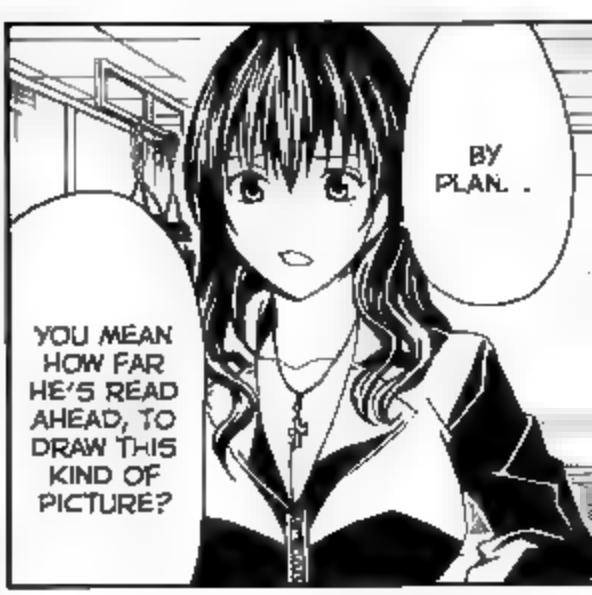
SHALL WE GO SEE IF THE PRINCESS ALSO KNOWS THAT TAKIGAWA YOSHINO'S GIRLFRIEND WAS FUWA AIKA?

WHAT ABOUT THE PRINCESS?
SO THEN,

IF THE "TREE OF GENESIS" HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH AIKA-CHAN'S DEATH...
THEN FOR YOSHINO-KUN'S SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF ASSUAGING HER OWN GUILT,
SHE WANTS TO DEFEAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS"?
IF THAT WEREN'T THE CASE...
THEN I DON'T THINK HAKAZE-CHAN WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH AN ABRUPT DECISION AND SET OUT WITH SUCH DETERMINATION.
IN OTHER WORDS,
IT'S BECAUSE OF LOVE, ISN'T IT?
IF THAT WERE THE CASE, THEN FOR SOME REASON, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THAT MAKES THINGS MORE COMPLICATED OR SIMPLE.
PERHAPS THIS TOUCHES UPON SOME FEELINGS THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND...
.....
THOUGH THAT EXPLANATION IS IRRATIONAL,
IT CERTAINLY IS PERSUASIVE.

NOW I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
BUT...


IS THIS ALL PART OF HIS PLAN?
IS YOSHINO-KUN THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"?


BY PLAN. .
YOU MEAN HOW FAR HE'S READ AHEAD, TO DRAW THIS KIND OF PICTURE?

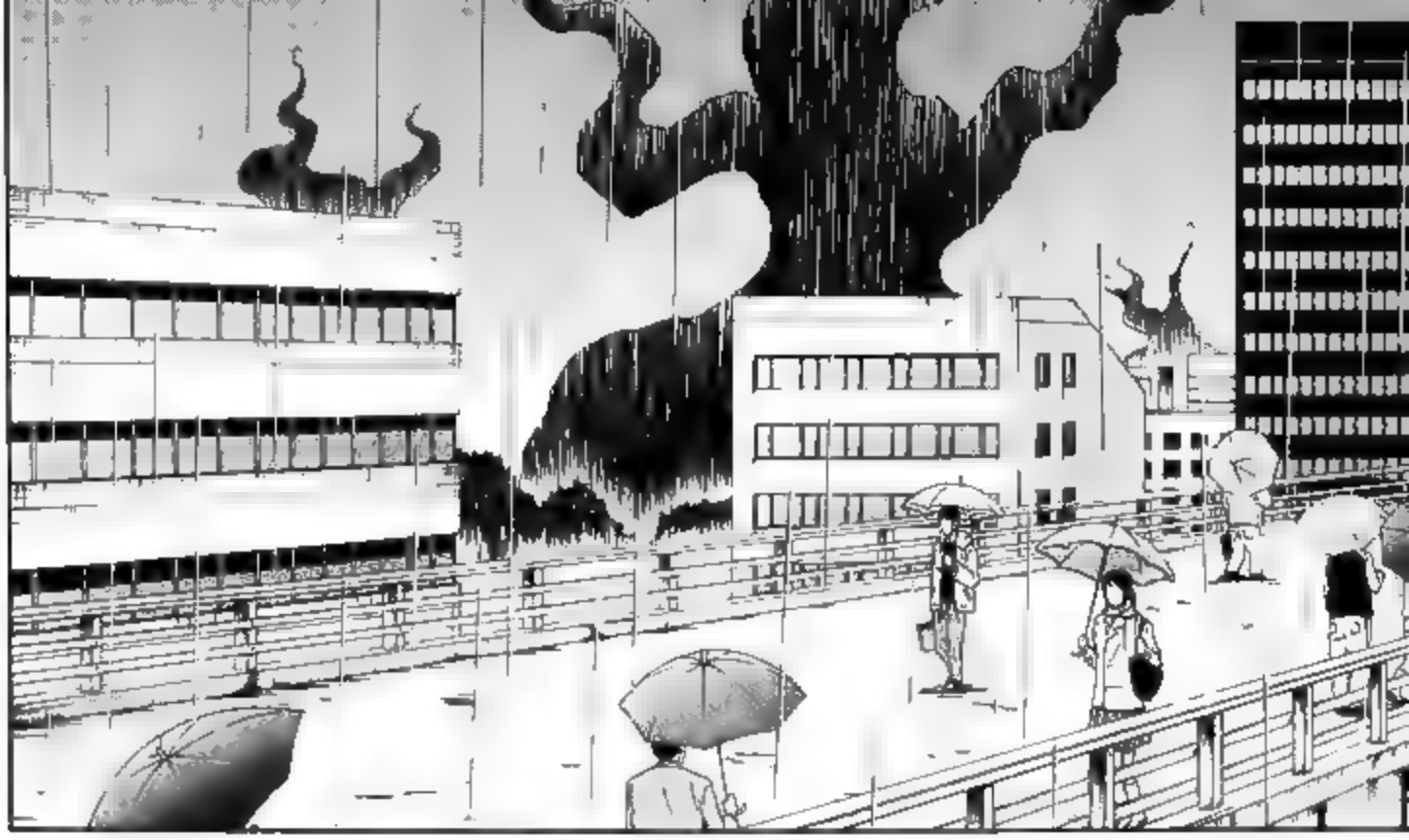
FUWA AIKA...
WHO KILLED HER, AND WHY.

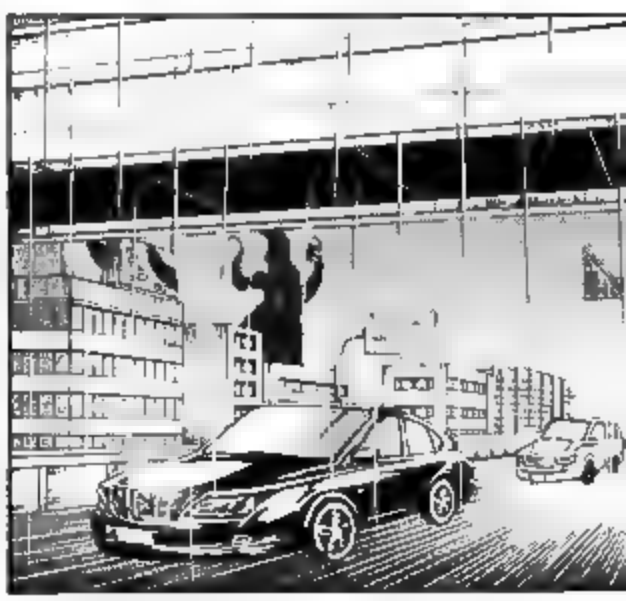
WAS IT THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS",
OR THE WILL OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS"...

IF WE KNEW THAT, THEN MAYBE WE'D UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IF YOU HAD KILLED HER,
THINGS WOULD JUST GET EVEN MORE CONFUSING...
UM...BUT I'M THE "MAGIC-AN OF EXODUS",
AND I DIDN'T KILL AIKA-SAN .
YOU CAN'T STAY NEUTRAL IN THIS MATTER, RIGHT?
JUN-ICHIROU.
FOR NOW, PLEASE KEEP A LOOK OUT ON THE PRINCESS AND TAKIGAWA YOSHINO.
I'LL COMMUN-.CATE REGULARLY BY CELL PHONE.
HAKAZE-CHAN MIGHT CATCH ON IF I USE MAGICAL COM-MUNICATION, AFTER ALL.
ALRIGHT.
I GOT IT.
I ACCEPT.

AT THE SAME TIME THAT WE PROCEED CAREFULLY,
THINGS THAT WE CAN MANAGE SHOULD BE DONE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
WE HAVE TO PROCEED WITH OUR PART OF THE PLAN, AS WE...
SO FRAULEIN...
YEAH.
THE PRINCESS' MOVEMENTS AS WELL. WE HAVE TO TAKE ALL OF THESE INTO ACCOUNT AND PROCEED WITH GREATER CAUTION.
MAHIRO AND TAKIGAWA YOSHINO...
HERO 38
HISTORI
SO THAT IF SOMETHING WERE TO HAPPEN, WE'D HAVE AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT OF TIME TO SPARE.





IS HE STILL ANGRY?
IT WAS ABOUT 10 DAYS AGO THAT FUWA MAHIRO STARTED QUESTIONING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIS SISTER AND HIS FRIEND, RIGHT?

SOME-HOW...
I FEEL THAT THINGS ARE RAPIDLY MOVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION...

ASIDE FROM TERSE RESPONSES, HE MAINLY JUST KEEPS QUIET.
IT'S BEEN HARD TO ENGAGE HIM TOO.
WE'VE DONE WHAT WE COULD, BUT...
SO IN THE END,
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO TELL HIM THE TRUTH, HUH...
HE'S TALENTED AND PERCEPTIVE, RIGHT?
THAT JUNICHIROU GUY...
HE STILL HASN'T FOUND THEM?
PUTTING THAT ASIDE,
WHAT ABOUT THE PRINCESS AND TAKIGAWA YOSHINO?

SINCE WE SPLIT UP LAST TIME, THE TWO OF THEM HAVE ERASED ALL TRACES OF THEIR MOVEMENTS...
IT SEEMS THAT EVEN WITH HIS TRACKING METHODS, IT'S LIKE THEY CAN'T BE FOUND AT ALL...

WELL...

AGAINST THE PRINCESS, WHO POSSESSES THE STRONGEST MAGIC,
SIMPLY USING MAGIC ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT.

THEY CAN'T BE FOUND EVEN WITH MAGIC?

WE WERE CARELESS, HUH...

YOSHINO-KUN'S CELL PHONE HAS BEEN SWITCHED OFF THIS WHOLE TIME TOO...
THEY'VE COMPLETELY HIDDEN THEMSELVES ON PURPOSE.

AT FIRST, HE SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT EVEN IF KAKAZE-SAN REALLY TRIED TO HIDE, HE'D STILL BE ABLE TO FIND HER, BUT...
IT SEEMS SHE REALLY ONE-UPPED HIM.
JUNICHIROU-KUN SAID THAT AS WELL...
JUST...
WHAT ARE THOSE 2 PLANNING TO DO?
IF THEY SAY THAT THEY'RE GOING TO DEFEAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS", AT THE VERY LEAST ON OUR SIDE HERE WE'RE LOOKING FOR A BASIS TO SAY THAT IT'S FINE FOR THEM TO DO SO.
SO WHY DON'T THEY WANT TO WORK TOGETHER WITH US?

AND WHAT ABOUT HANE-MURA MEGUMU?
HE'S NOT GETTING OUT OF LINE NOW, IS HE?
THESE UNSETTLING FACTORS ARE JUST NCREASING DAY BY DAY.
THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN SAYING THAT THIS ISN'T GOOD...
OH, HE'S FINE.
必殺技
HE'S PREPPING PROPERLY FOR NEXT TIME.
I WAS THINKING WE SHOULD WAIT A BIT LONGER, BUT...
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'D BETTER SPEED THINGS UP.
NEXT...
THAT'S RIGHT.

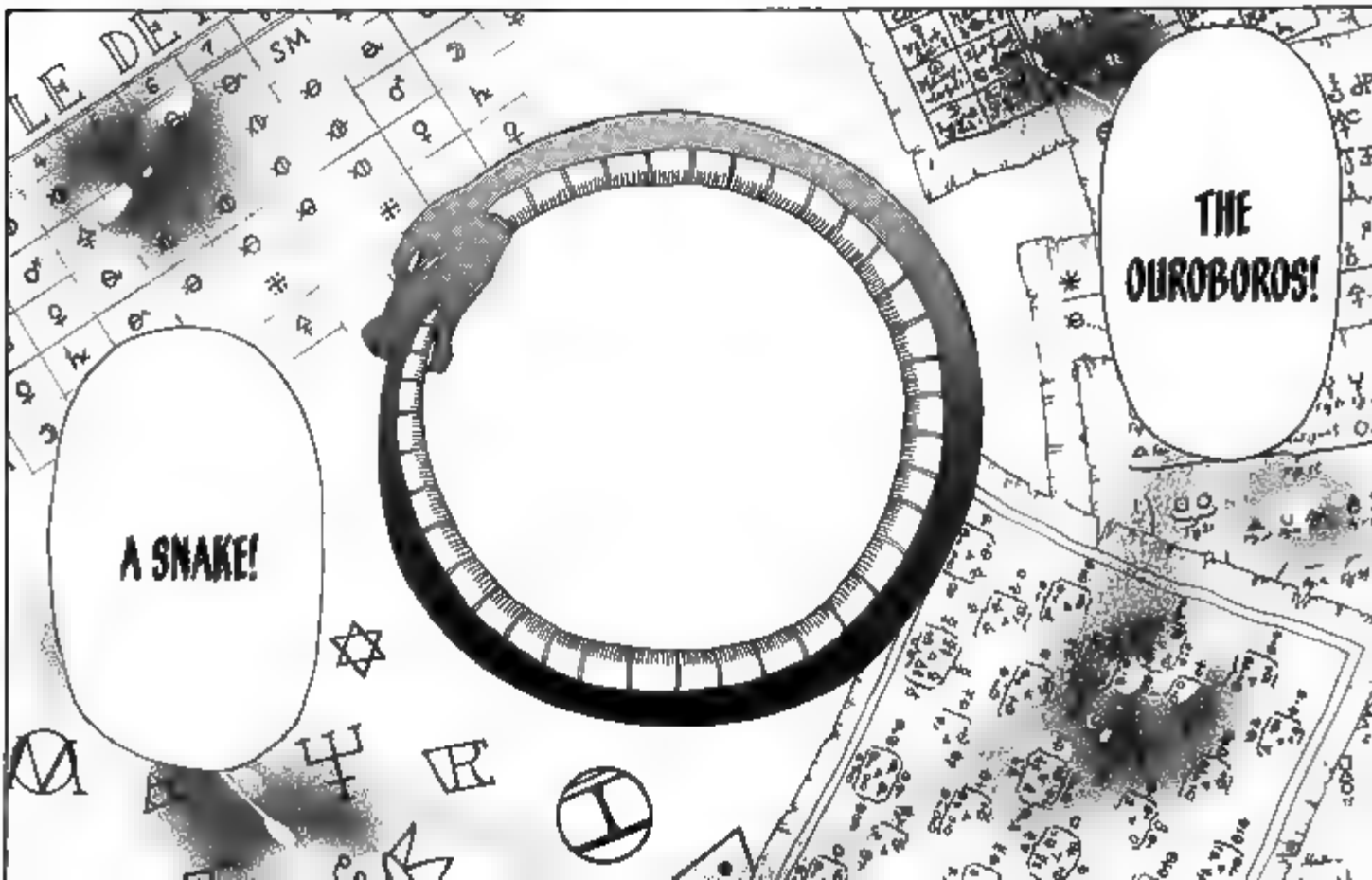
THAT VIEW-POINT,
REPRE-SENTS OUR SITUATION QUITE WELL.
A "SNAKE" OR A "DRAGON," HUH...
THAT TREE IS LIKE...
FOR EXAMPLE, TAKE HOW THE "TREE OF GENESIS" BROUGHT ABOUT THE IRON SICKNESS.
IT CAUSED THIS ABSURD PHENOMENON OF LIVING THINGS TURNING INTO METAL.
IT'S STILL A MINORITY OPINION.
EVEN IF THAT'S THE CASE,
ALL SORTS OF SUP-POSITIONS COME UP...
STILL, IF YOU BRING UP SNAKES, DRAGONS AND THE LIKE,
IS UNTHINKABLE, SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING.
ON AN ATOMIC LEVEL, TO CONVERT MATTER INTO SOMETHING ELSE,

AH... ALCHEMY, RIGHT?
CONVERTING MATTER...

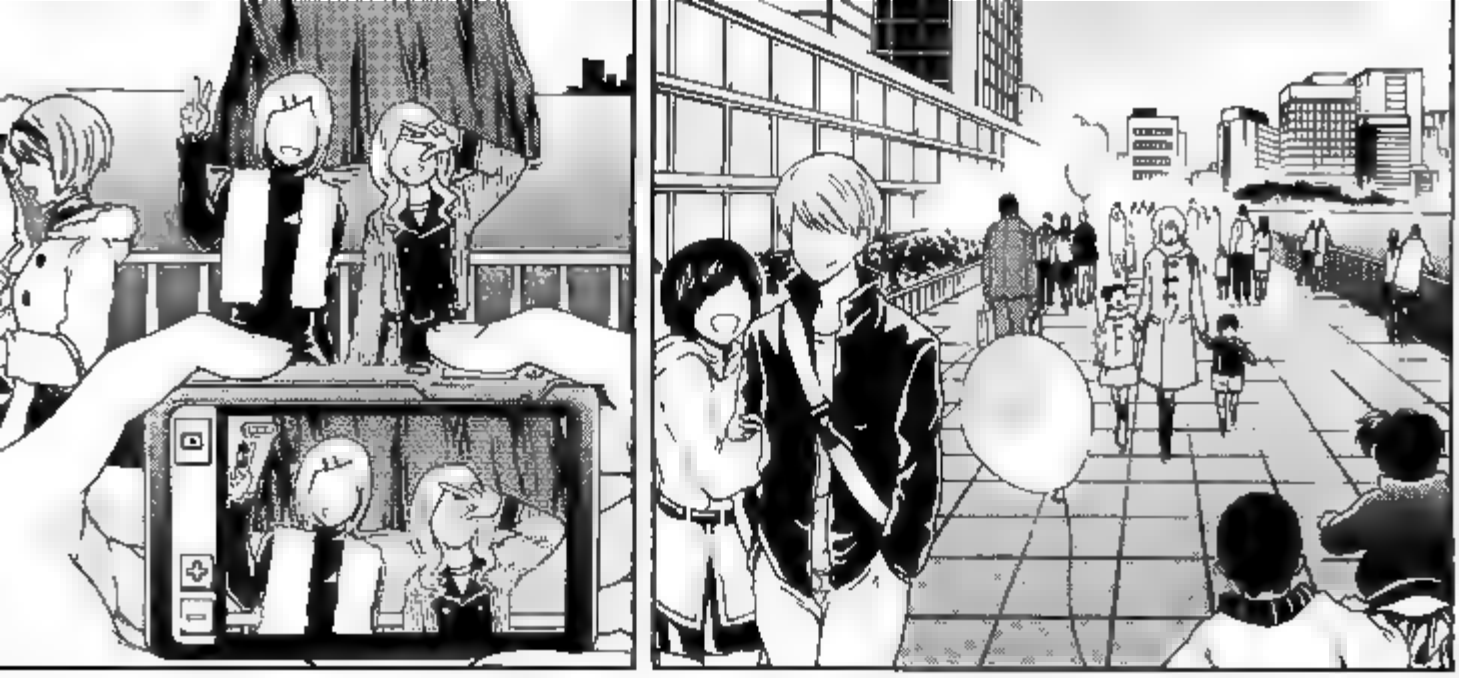
HOW-EVER
THERE IS ONE DISCIPLINE THAT HAS STUDIED THIS PHENOMENON.

WHAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS" HAS DONE IS ESSENTIALLY ALCHEMY.
EXACTLY.

WHAT HAS OFTEN BEEN USED AS A SYMBOL OF ALCHEMY?
AND DO YOU KNOW,


A SNAKE!
THE OUROBOROS!

OR IS THERE SOME MEANING TO IT?
IS IT JUST A COIN-CIDENCE?
IT'S NOT JUST THE OUROBOROS.
SNAKES IN GENERAL ARE OFTEN USED AS A SYMBOL IN ALCHEMY.
IT'LL BE MARCH SOON, BUT IT'S BEEN ONE CHILLING EVENT AFTER ANOTHER.
WE'D BETTER SPEED UP,
THE NEXT APPEAR-ANCE OF THE "MAGI-CIAN OF EXODUS."
IT'S PROBABLY BEST,
TO ERASE AS MUCH OF THAT TREE FROM VIEW AS POSSIBLE.



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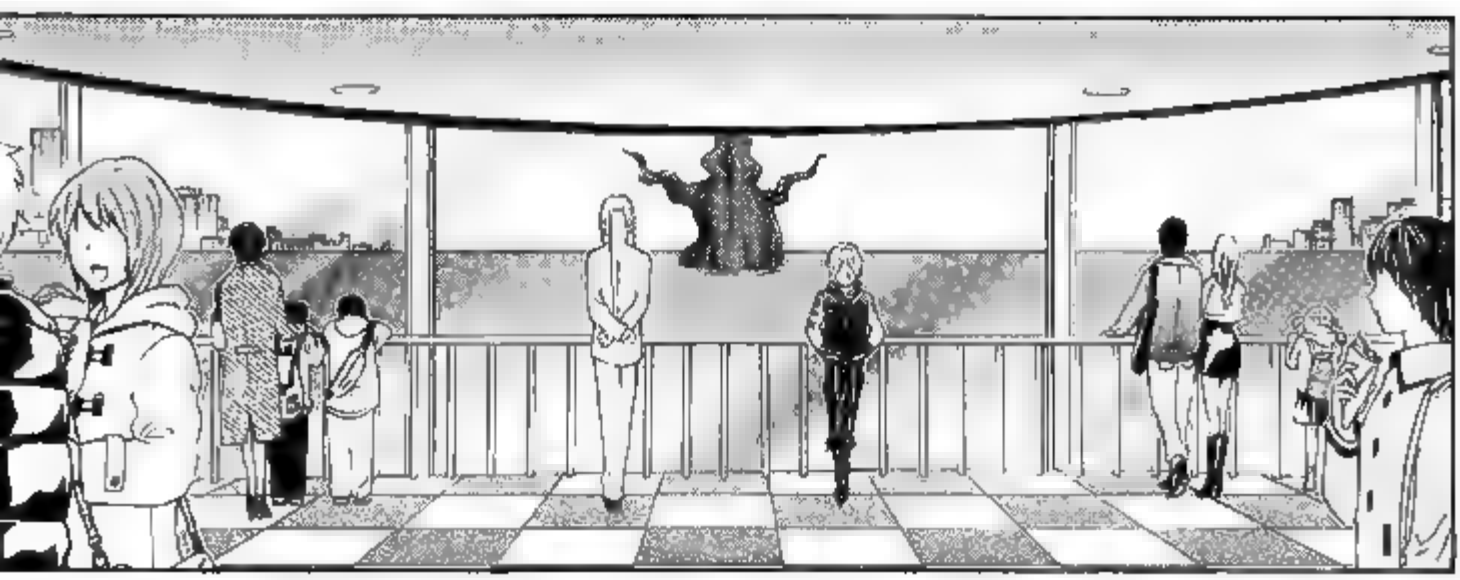
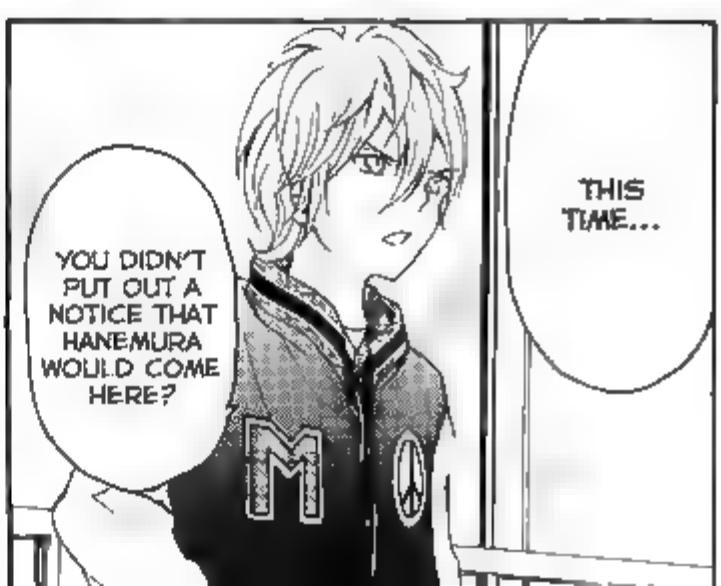
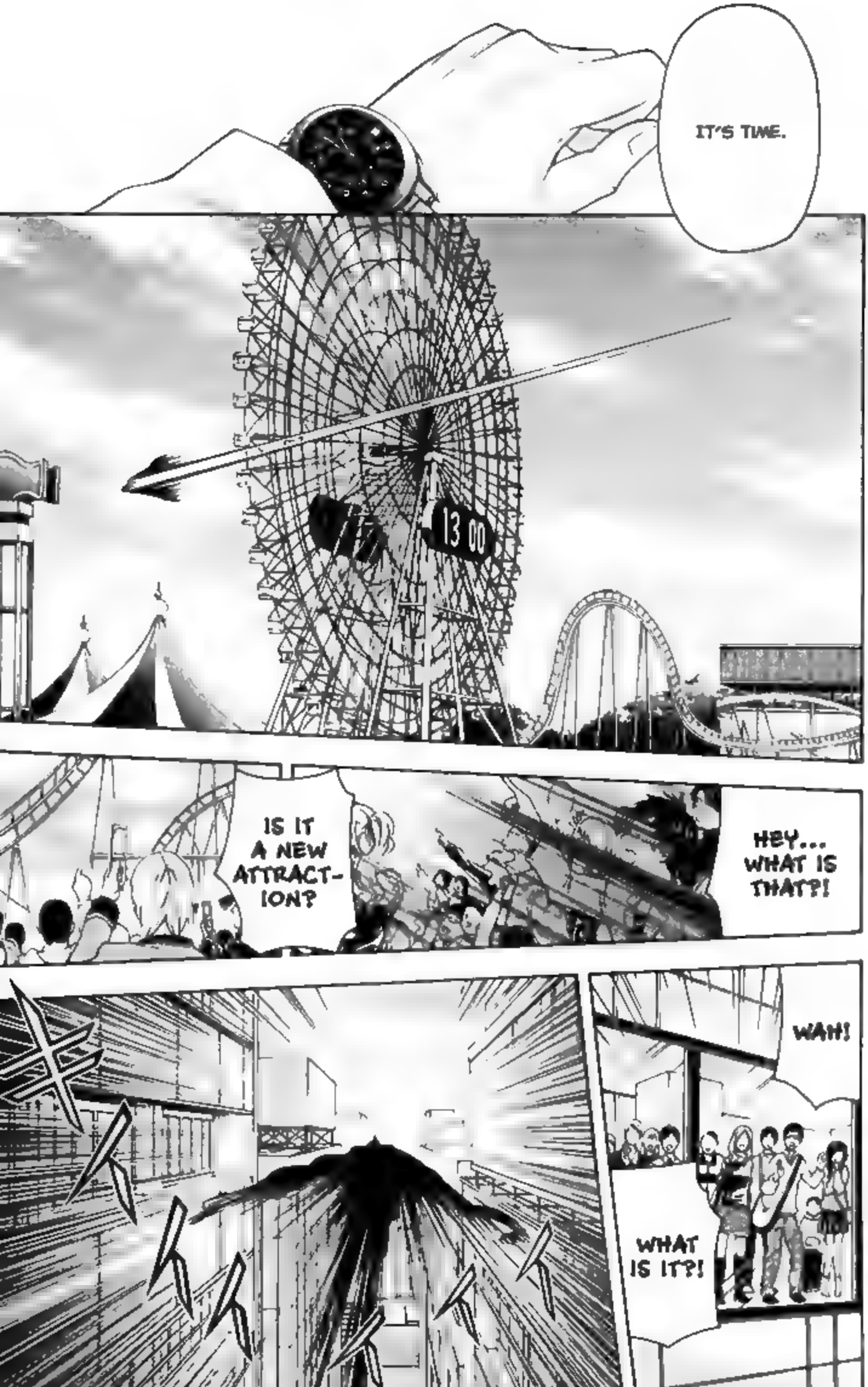


SO I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULDN'T BE TRUSTED EVEN IF I DID PUT ONE OUT
THERE HAVE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE PUTTING OUT NOTICES AS PRANKS LATELY,


YOU DIDN'T PUT OUT A NOTICE THAT HANEMURA WOULD COME HERE?
THIS TIME...

YBTV
THERE'S EVEN A TELEVISION STATION LOCATED NEXT TO US.
EVEN IF THERE'S NO NOTICE, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE HERE.
FIRST...
IF HANE-KURA WERE TO APPEAR THERE WOULD BE NO SHORT AGE OF EYE WITNESSES AND RECORD-INGS FOR THE NEWS.
THERE ARE ALREADY A NUMBER OF CAMERAS AROUND.
IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF SOME FILM SHOOT,
MORE-OVER,
IF WE PUT OUT A NOTICE,
IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE PRIN-CESS TO DO SOMETHING AND THAT WOULD BE TROUBL.NG...


IT'S TIME.
13 00
IS IT A NEW ATTRACT-ION?
HEY... WHAT IS THAT?!
WAH!
WHAT IS IT?!

SEASIDE
TURN THE CAMERAS OVER THERE!
FORGET ABOUT THE SHOOT!
THAT'S...
!!

THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"!

NEVER MIND THAT, IT'S THE REAL DEAL!
BUT THERE WAS NO NOTICE, RIGHT?
NO, 3 WEEKS?!
IT'S BEEN 2 WEEKS SINCE THE APPEARANCE IN HAWAII, HUH.

THAT HANE-MURA...
HE'S FLOATING QUITE A DISTANCE AWAY FROM THAT BRANCH OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS."
IT'S BECAUSE THE PREVIOUS METHOD OF DES-TRUCTION WASN'T MPRESSIVE ENOUGH.
WE'VE CHANGED THE PER-FORMANCE A BIT
PEOPLE ARE NEVER SATISFIED.
WE HAVE TO CHANGE THINGS UP TO STAY RELEVANT.

OHHHH!
AS EXPECTED, GIVING THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER A FORM,
DEFINITELY HAS MORE VISUAL IMPACT.

BUT RATHER TRACING AN ORBIT LIKE A HEAVENLY BODY,
AND THEN,
NOT STRIKING DIRECTLY,
IT MAKES FOR MUCH MORE OF A SHOW.
AND STR K.NG THE PORTION OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS" AT THE END.

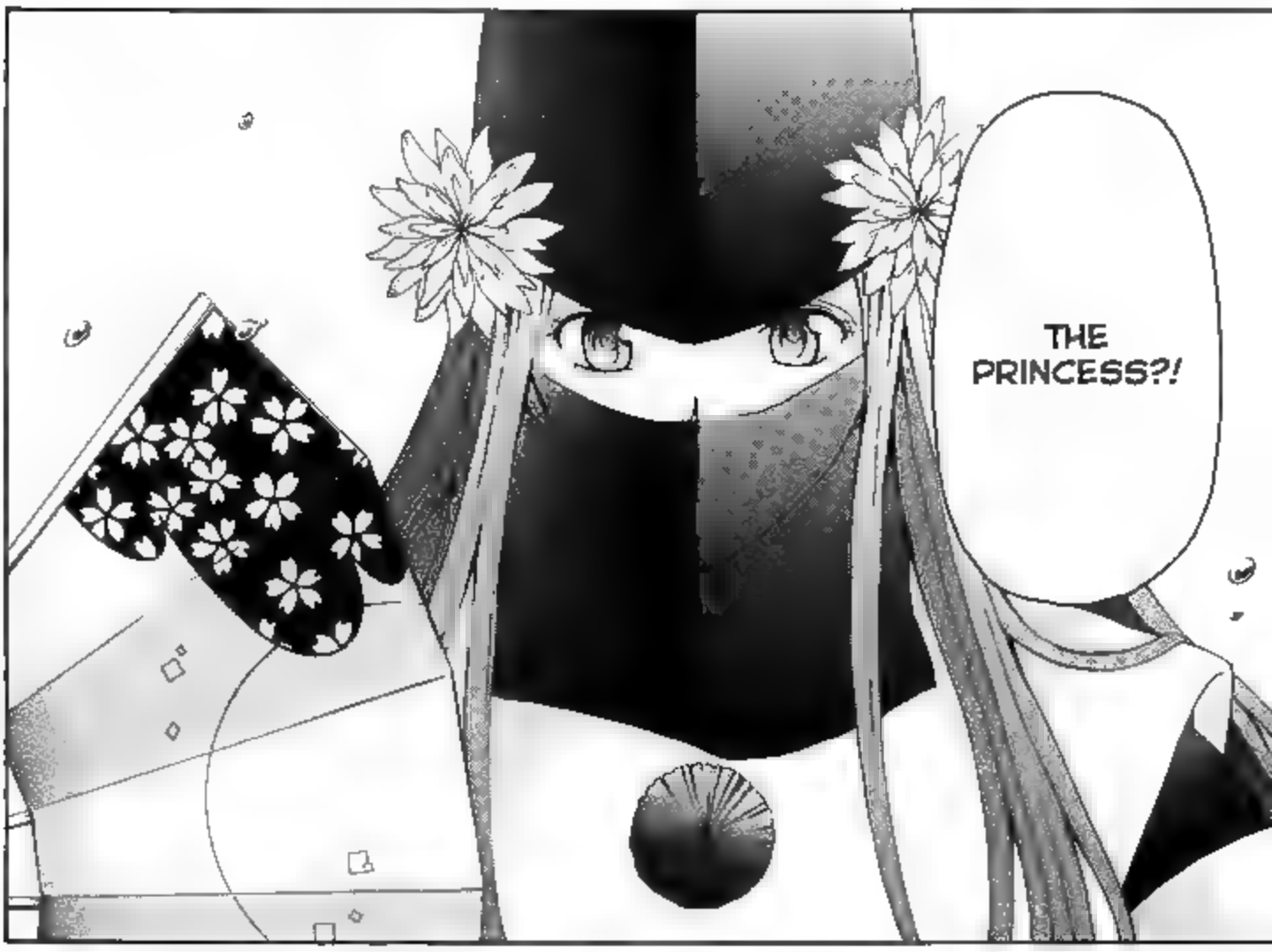
HMMM...
HE'S CERTAINLY GOTTEN QUITE GOOD AT HANDLING MAGIC.
IT'D BE NO LAUGHING MATTER IF HE HADN'T.
IF STRUCK DIRECTLY BY THAT, A SMALL CITY WOULD BE ERASED.
IT'D BE A CATASTROPHE TO HIT THE WRONG PLACE.
ALRIGHT
SUCCESS.

PART OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS" MOVED,
AND STOPPED IT?!
?!

I didn't hear about this!
Wha... what is that?!
THIS IS..
YEAH...
THIS DEVELOP-MENT WASN'T ANTI-CIPATED?

UM...
SOME-
THING'S
COMING
OUT FROM
THE
WHIRL-
POOL!
LOOK...
A PERSON
CAME OUT!?

ISN'T THAT...


THE PRINCESS?!

絶園のテンペスト

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

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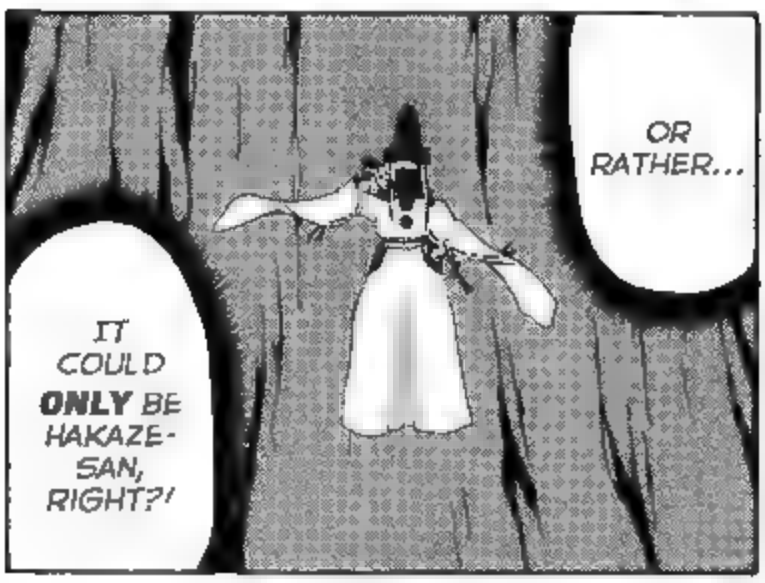
CHAPTER 1-28: MAYASVI [WAR CEREMONY]

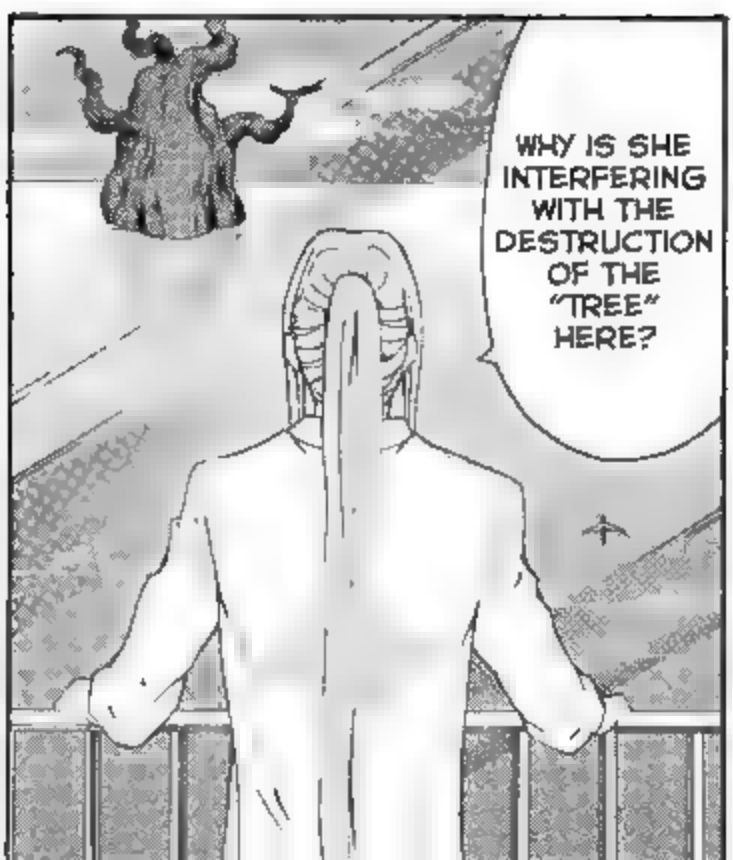
THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

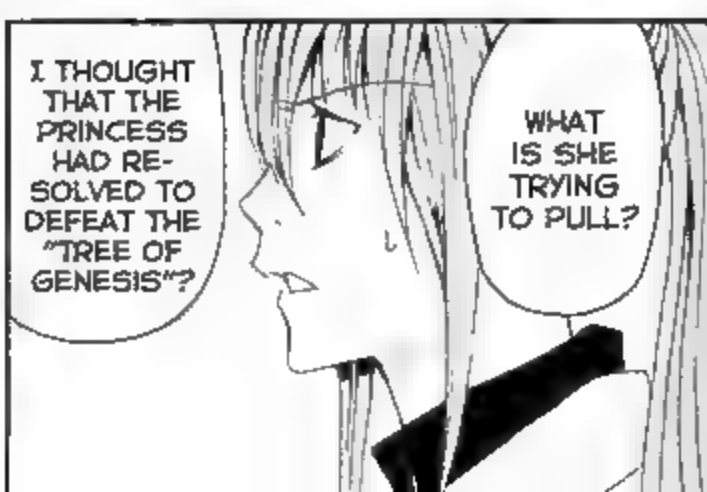
IS THAT...

THE PRINCESS...!

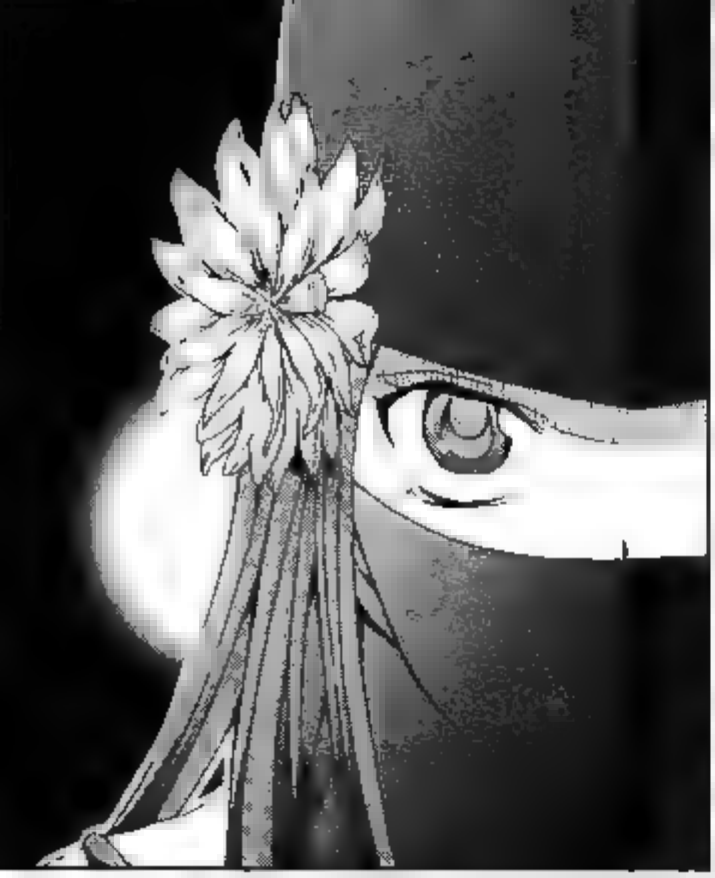

IT COULD **ONLY** BE HAKAZE-SAN, RIGHT?!
OR RATHER...

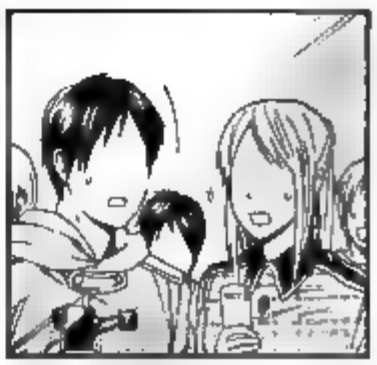
HAKAZE-SAN?!
HUH?

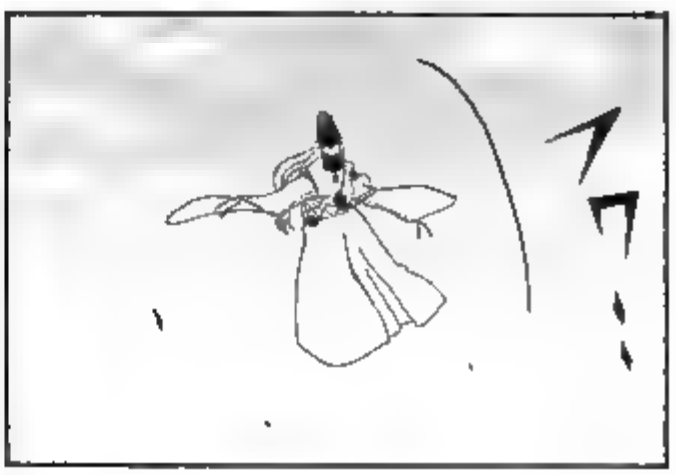

WHY IS SHE INTERFERING WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE "TREE" HERE?


I THOUGHT THAT THE PRINCESS HAD RE-SOLVED TO DEFEAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS"?
WHAT IS SHE TRYING TO PULL?

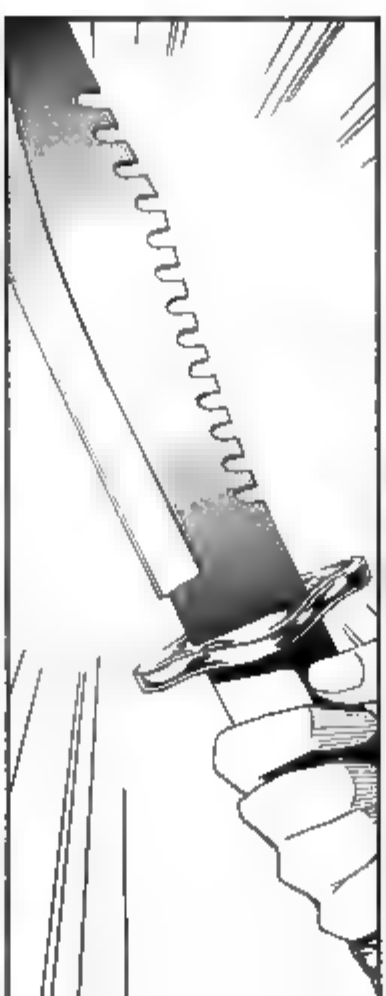
Now then.
Look well.







Great Oak within Oak
Tree within Tree



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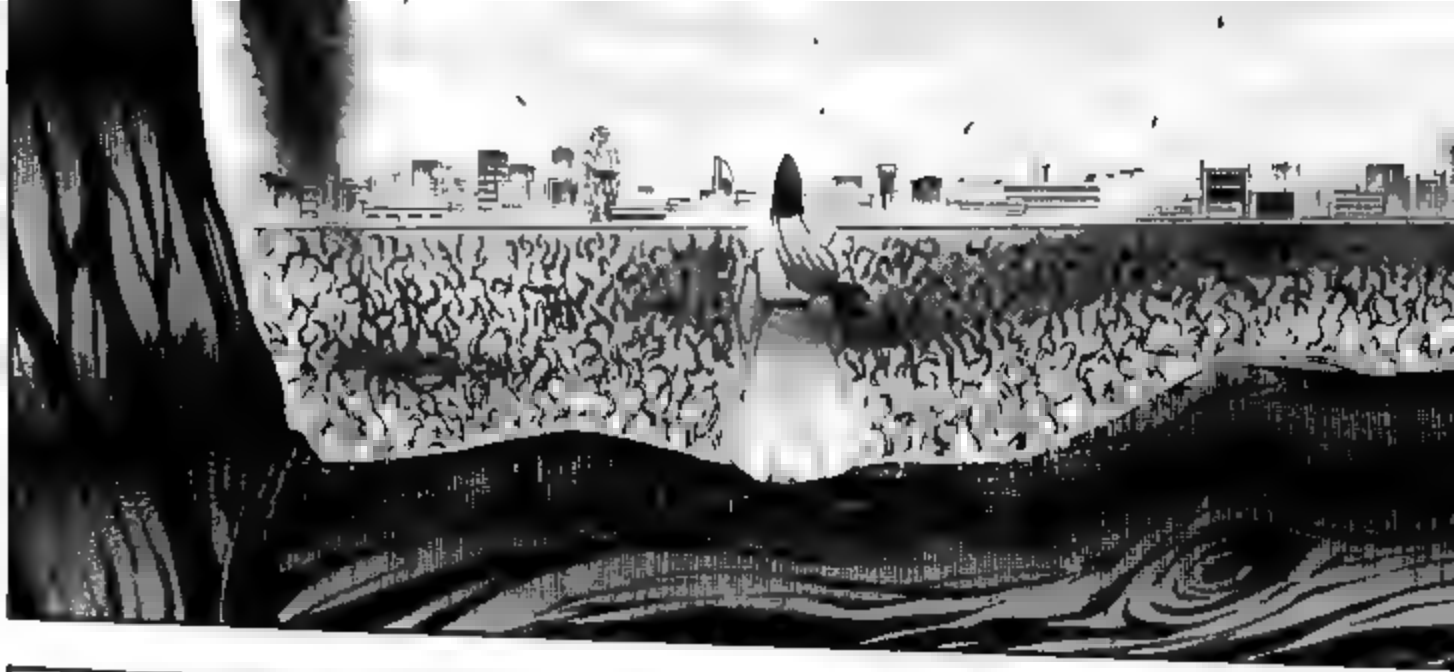
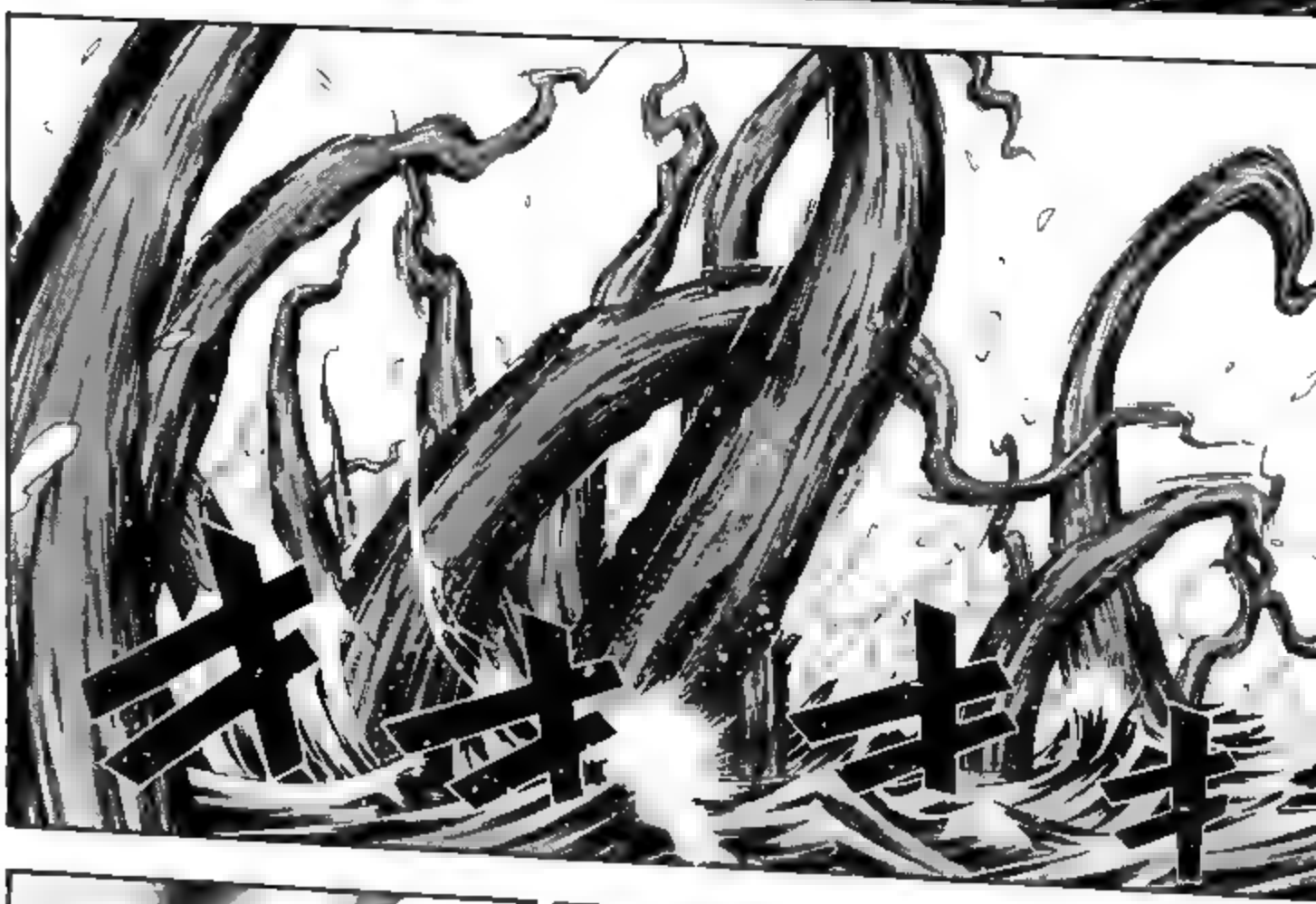
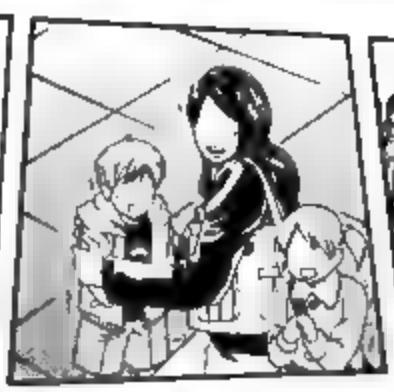
ミシ…

Hear this noble name and grant my desire!





Could it be...
Is this "Tree" going to attack again, like before?



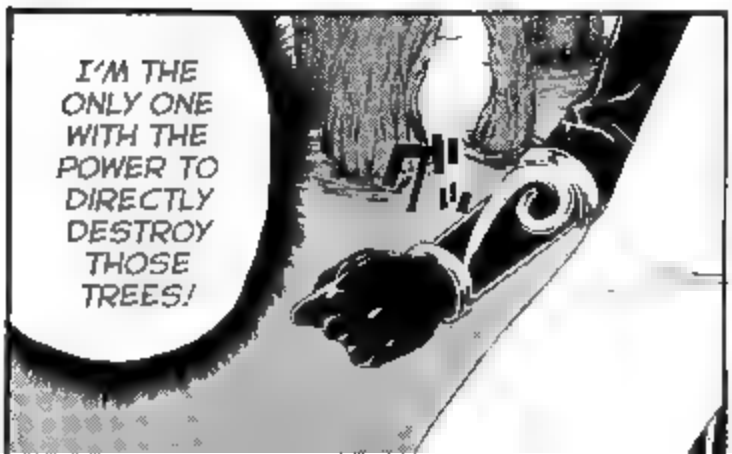
What is this?
What...

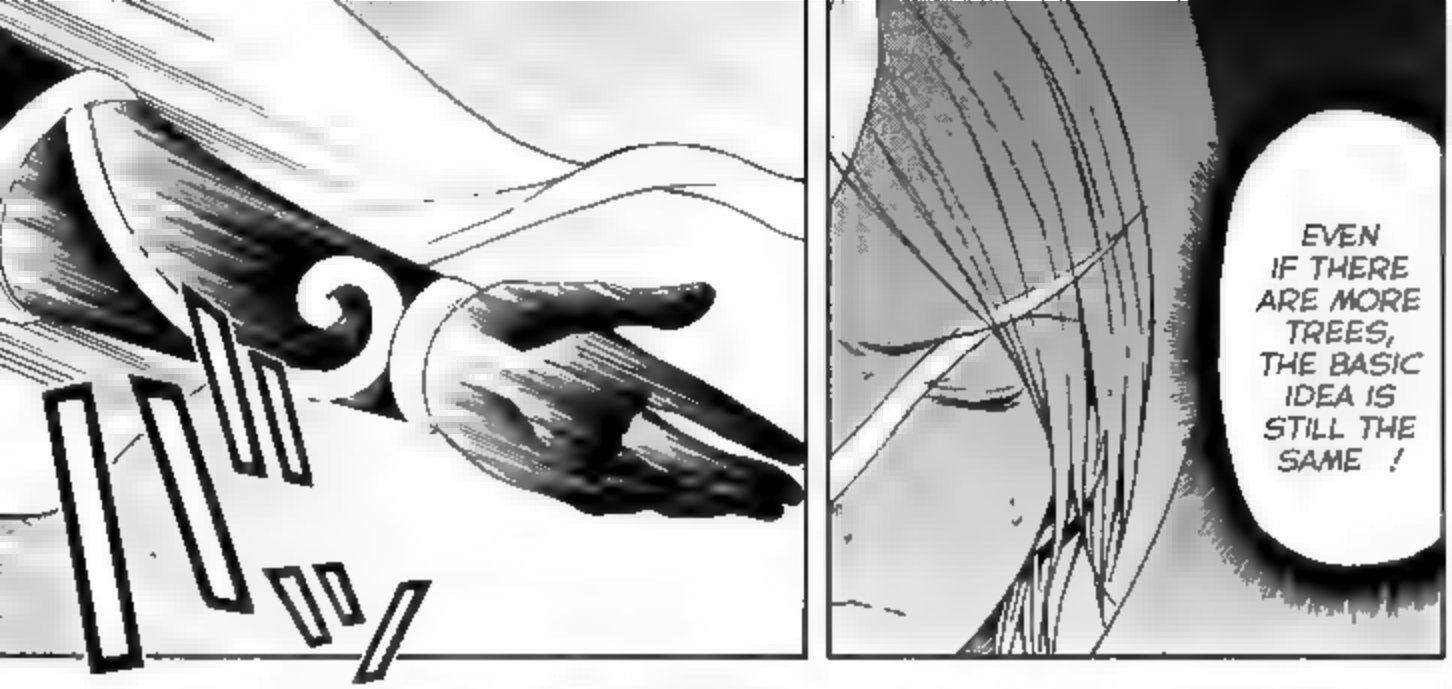
IF THE PEOPLE DON'T SEE SOME SORT OF MOVEMENT SOON, THEY'RE GOING TO START RIOTING...
SHOULDN'T YOU GIVE HANEMURA SOME DIRECTION?
THERE'S A WIRELESS TRANSCEIVER CONNECTED UNDER HIS MASK, RIGHT?
FRAULEIN HAS THE WIRELESS.
SHE SHOULD ALREADY BE GIVING HIM APPROPRIATE DIRECTIONS.
At this rate, the crowds frightened by the "Tree",
Will start to panic!
HANEMURA-KUN, CALM DOWN!
PLEASE DESTROY THE NEW SNAKE-LIKE "TREES" THAT HAVE APPEARED ON THE SURFACE OF THE OCEAN! DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE ONE REMAINING!

RUNNING AWAY NOW WOULD LEAVE A BAD IMPRESSION!
IT WOULD LOOK LIKE THE "MAGGAN OF EXODUS" IS AFRAID OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS"

ORIGINALLY I WAS GOING TO MAKE HIM RETREAT, BUT...

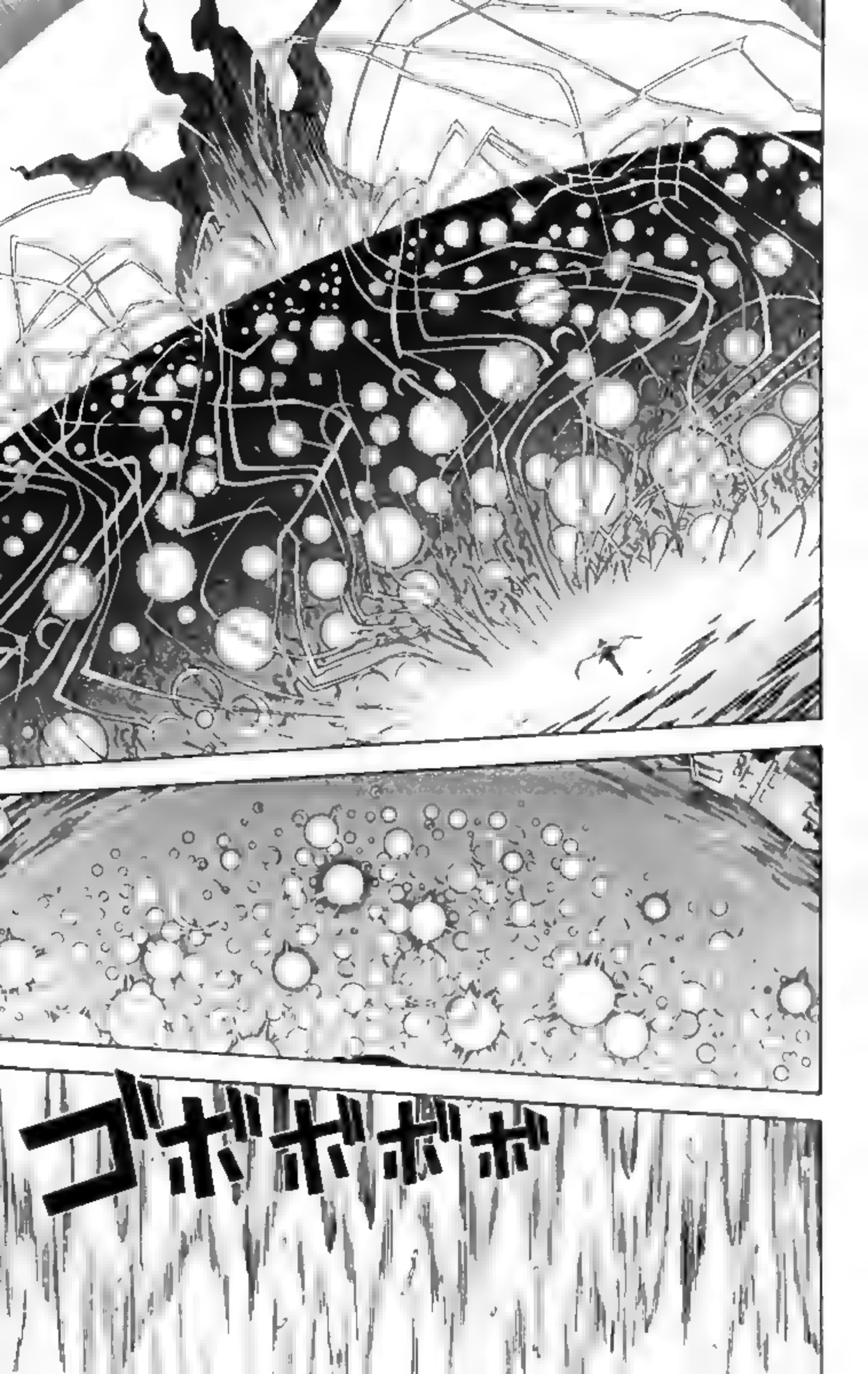
CALM DOWN!
THAT'S RIGHT!


I'M THE ONLY ONE WITH THE POWER TO DIRECTLY DESTROY THOSE TREES!


EVEN IF THERE ARE MORE TREES, THE BASIC IDEA IS STILL THE SAME !

HEY!
THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" IS DOING SOME-THING!

CARPET BOMB...!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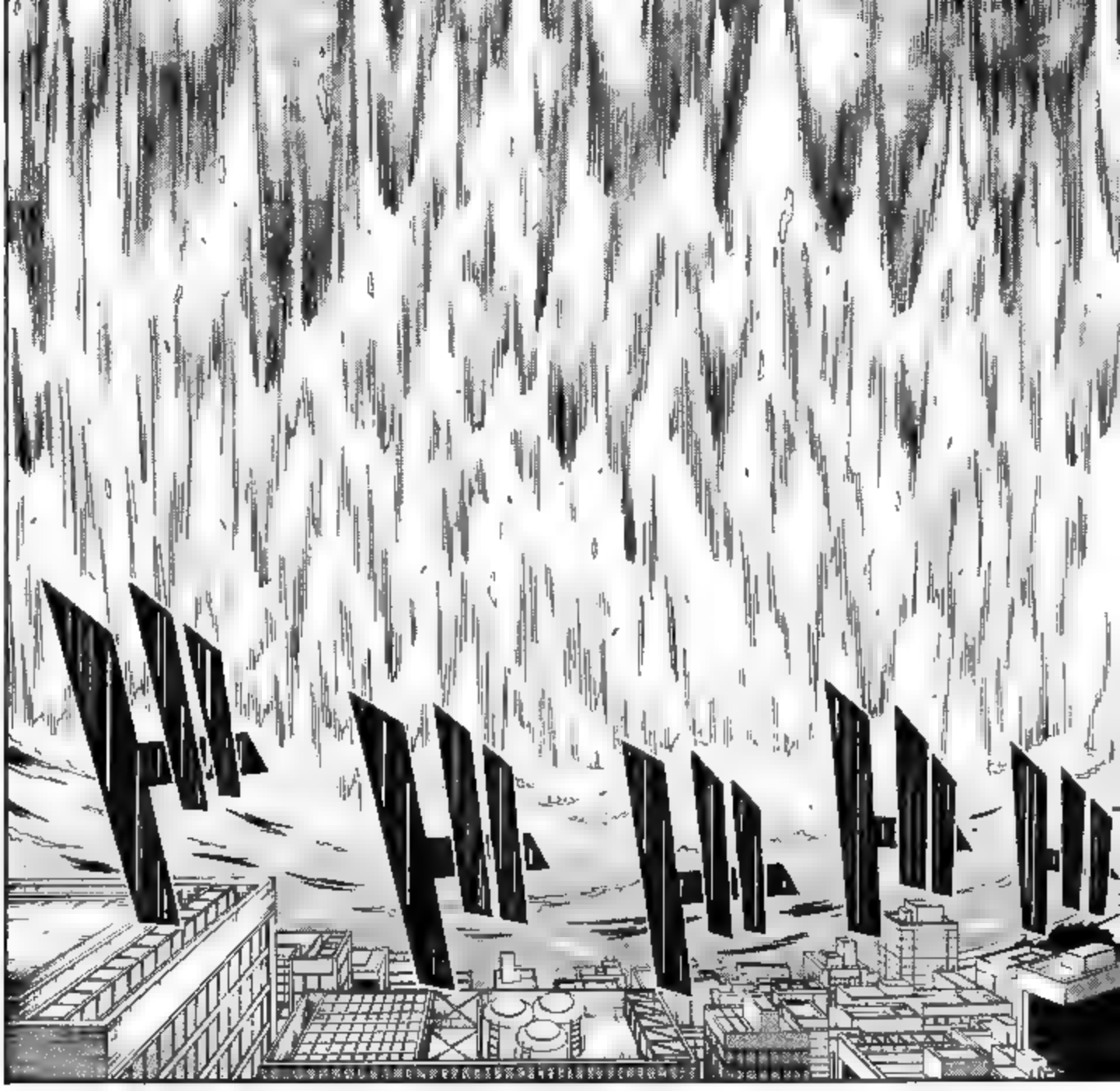

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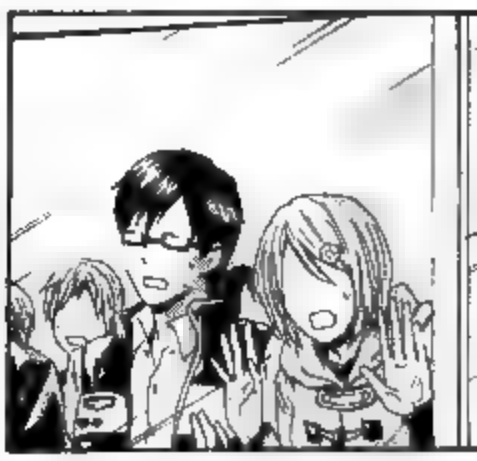

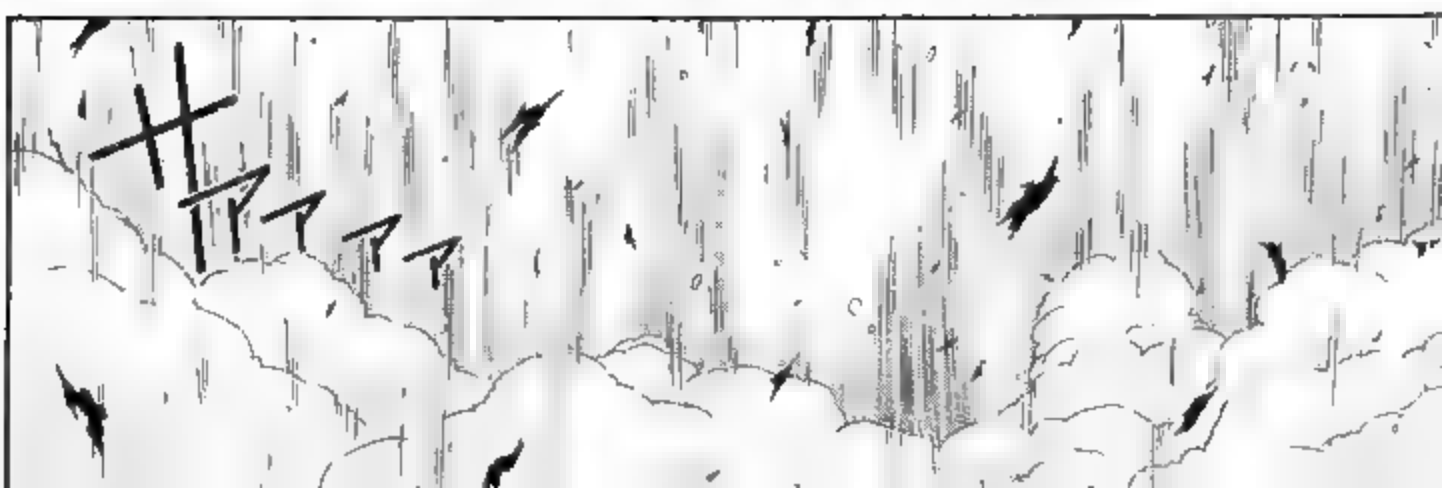
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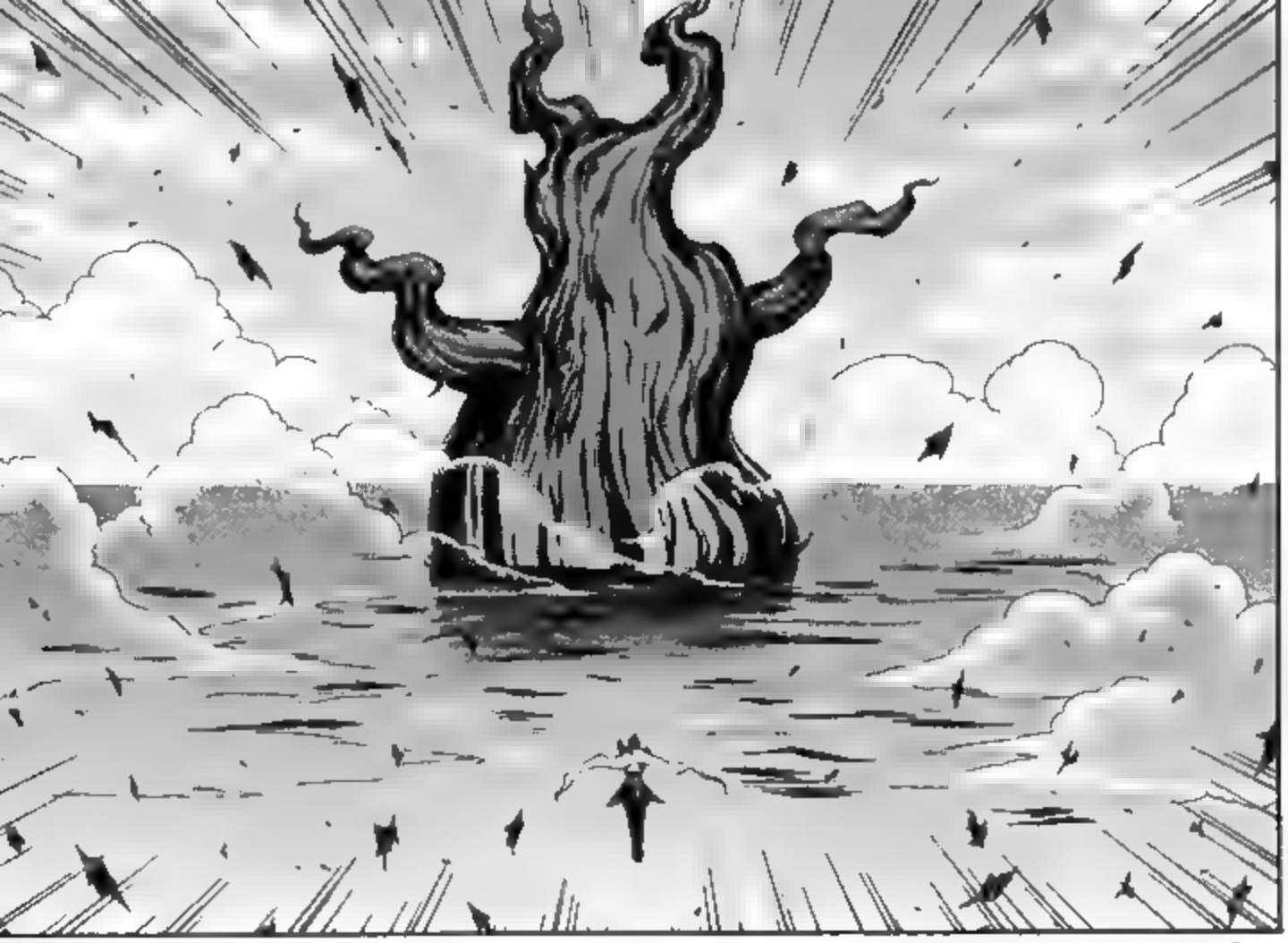
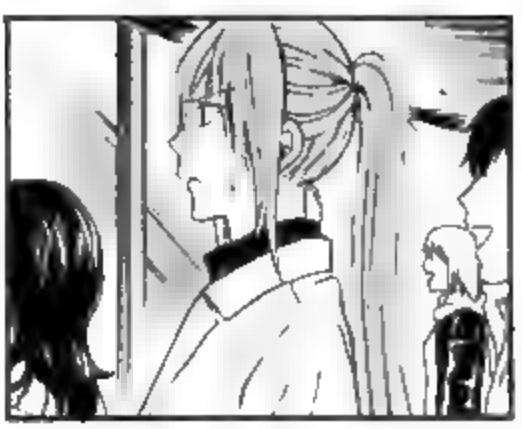


THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" REALLY IS INCREDIBLE...!
DO

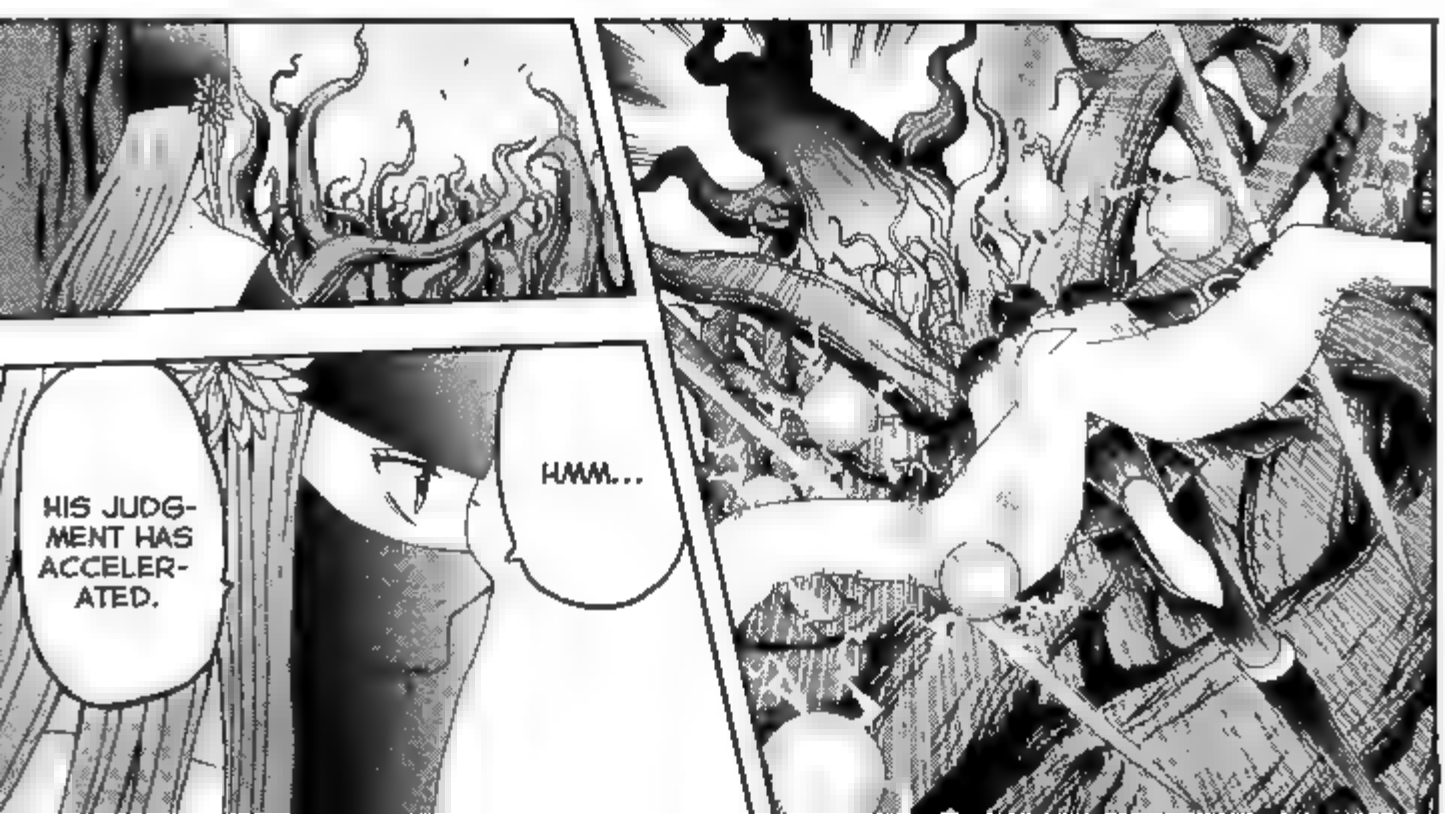
IT'S TOO EARLY TO CELEBRATE.



It's a monster...
It... regener-ated...
!!?
ッ……！
ガキン

I HAVE TO ATTACK HAKAZE-SAN...!
IN THAT CASE,
IT SEEMS POINTLESS NO MATTER HOW MANY ARE DESTROYED.

HERE I GO!
ガキン
ガキン


HIS JUDG-MENT HAS ACCELER-ATED.
HMM...

EH?
EHH?!
BOTH YOUR MOVEMENTS AND ATTACKS ARE TOO WEAK...
AT THIS RATE, THERE WILL BE NO END TO IT!
WHICH... WHICH WAY IS UP?!
WHICH WAY IS DOWN?!
THIS VOICE...
IT REALLY IS HAKAZE-SAN!

HAKAZE-SAN!
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?!
DIDN'T YOU ALSO AGREE WITH DEFEATING THE "TREE OF GENESIS"?!
EVEN IF OUR GOAL IS THE SAME,
THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE MUST TAKE THE SAME PATH TO GET THERE.
MOREOVER, HANEMURA.

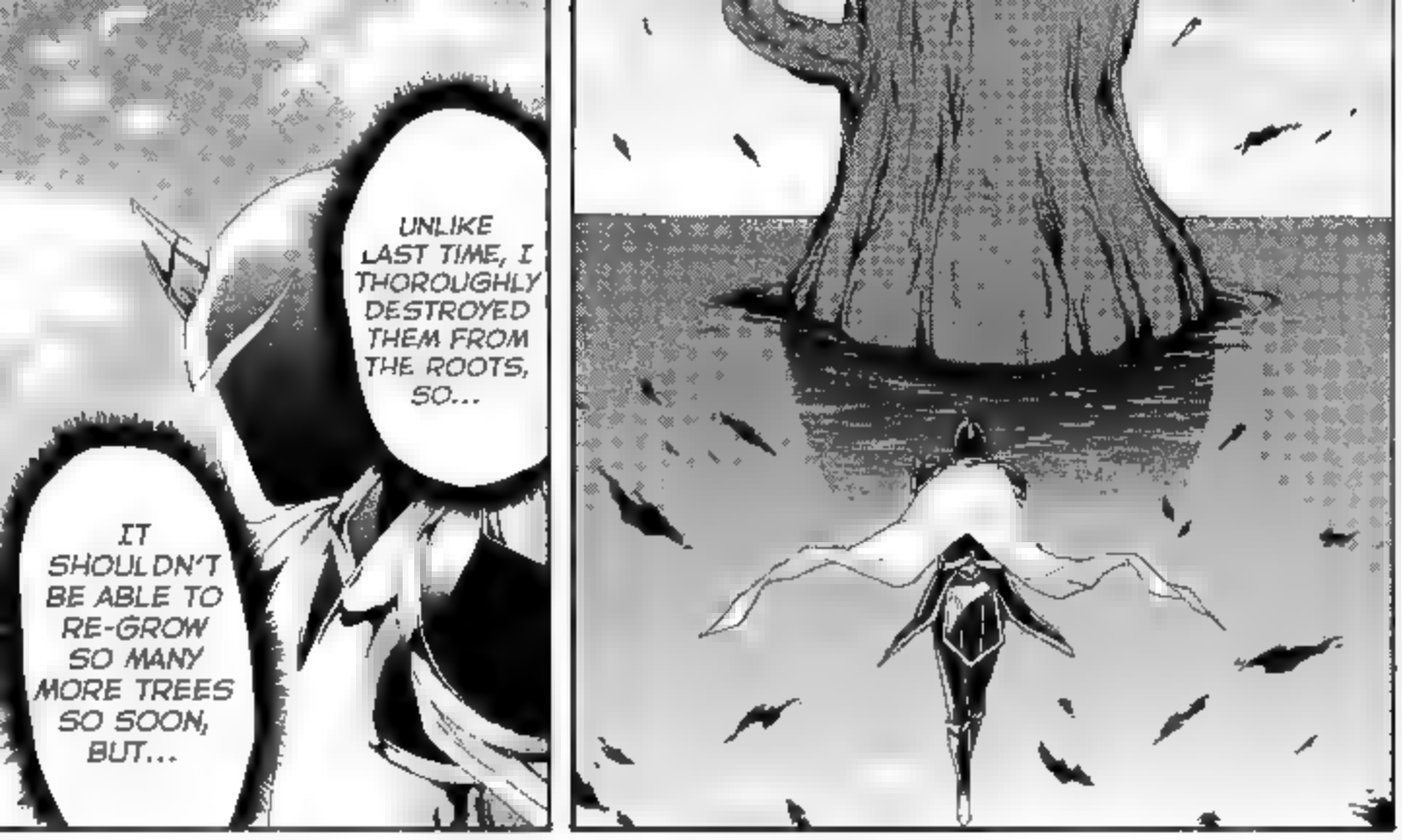
ボロ…
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT BY FIGHTING LIKE THIS,
YOU'LL ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS" ITSELF?!
GAH...
AS IF I'D BE BEATEN BY THIS!

WHERE'S HAKAZE-SAN?!
WE'RE IN MID-AIR.
DON'T THINK THAT YOUR SENSATIONS ARE THE SAME AS WHEN YOU'RE ON THE GROUND.
!?

KU!!
MY ATTACKS HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE "TREE"?!
THIS IS HAKAZE-SAN'S DOING...

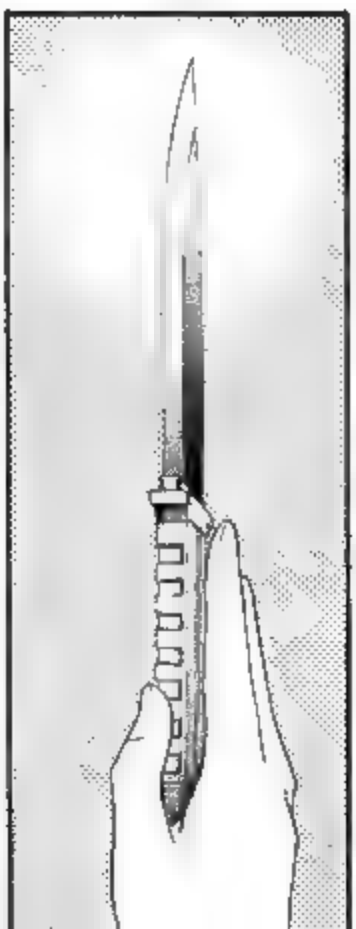
...THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"...
LOST...?
WHAT'S HE DOING!
GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!
HANEMURA-KUN!
HANEMURA ISN'T THAT WEAK.
DON'T FRET.

HO...
THERE IT IS...

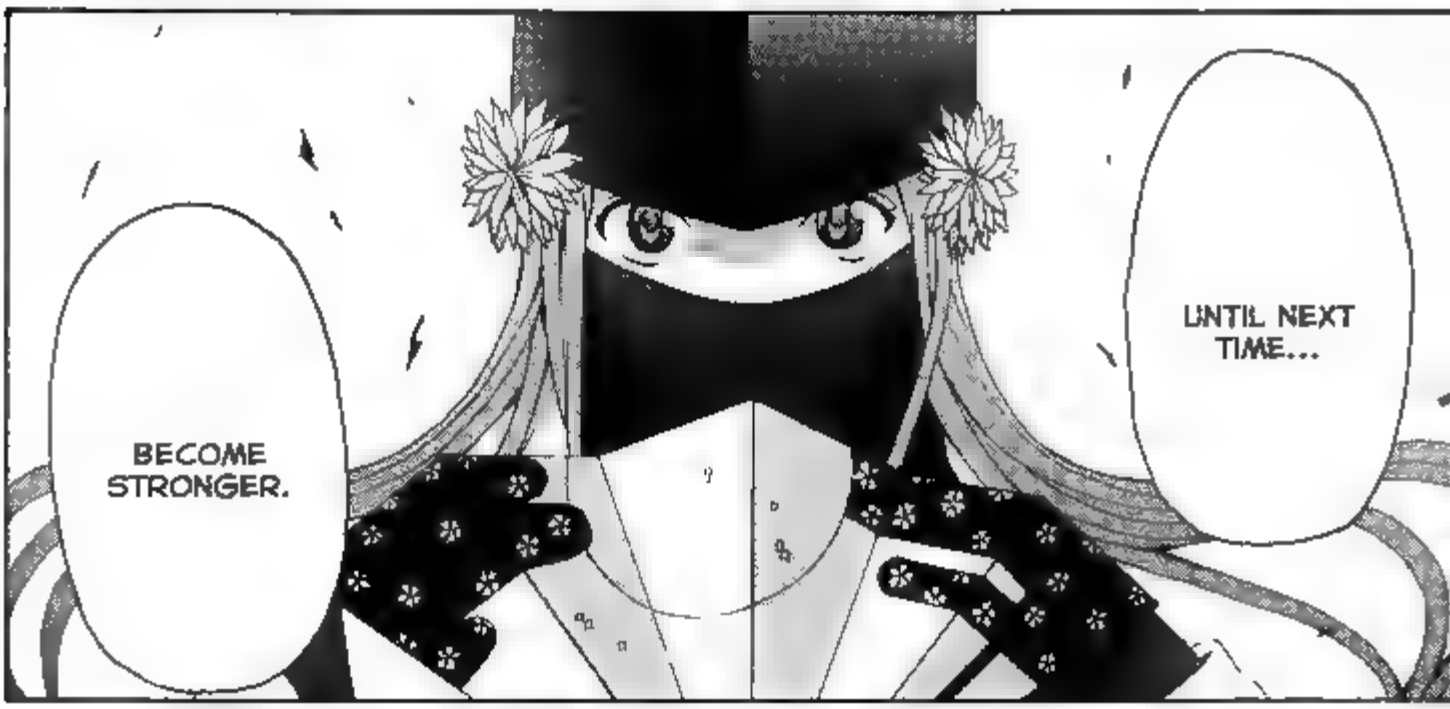

UNLIKE LAST TIME, I THOROUGHLY DESTROYED THEM FROM THE ROOTS, SO...
IT SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RE-GROW SO MANY MORE TREES SO SOON, BUT...

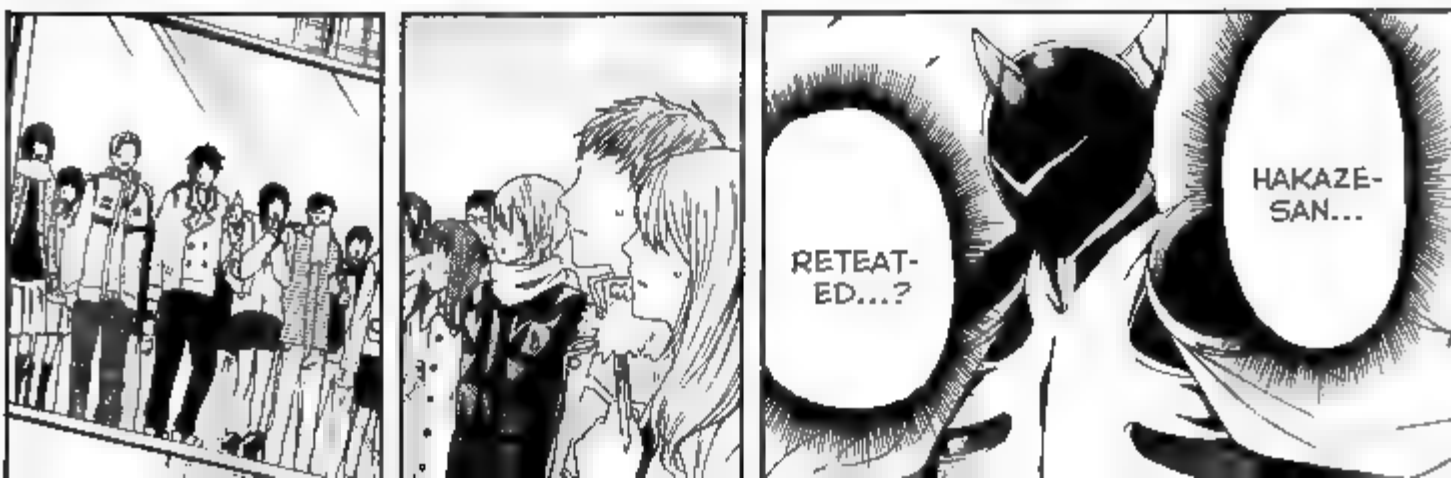
THEN IT MIGHT BE OVER ALREADY...
IF THEY DO GROW...

Tree within Tree, Great Oak within Oak...



THIS IS IT, HUH?
ANY MORE AND HANEMURA WON'T LAST.


BECOME STRONGER.
UNTIL NEXT TIME...


RETEAT-ED...?
HAKAZE-SAN...

DID I WIN?
OR DID I LOSE?

IF YOU BACK OUT AT THIS POINT,
THEY'LL THINK THAT THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" COMPLETELY LOST!

Hanemura-kun! You must be tired, but...
As originally planned, please destroy that portion of the "Tree of Genesis"!

WHO KNOWS.
LET'S THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY.

DID THE PRINCESS...
REALLY HAVE NO INTENTION OF GETTING IN HANEMURA'S WAY?

Is that... Mahiro...?
With Samon-kun-san?

DRIVIN
ON THE DARK

DRIVING
DANCE
ONE MORE DARE
DRIV
DANG
THEY EVEN LET MAHIRO WAKE UP...
IT LOOKS LIKE SAMON-SAN AND THE OTHERS ARE PLANNING SOMETHING ON THEIR OWN AS WELL...

MAHIRO WAS THERE?
HOTEL

IT LOOKS LIKE HE WAS WATCHING THE WHOLE TIME, ALONG WITH SAMON-SAN.

YEAH.

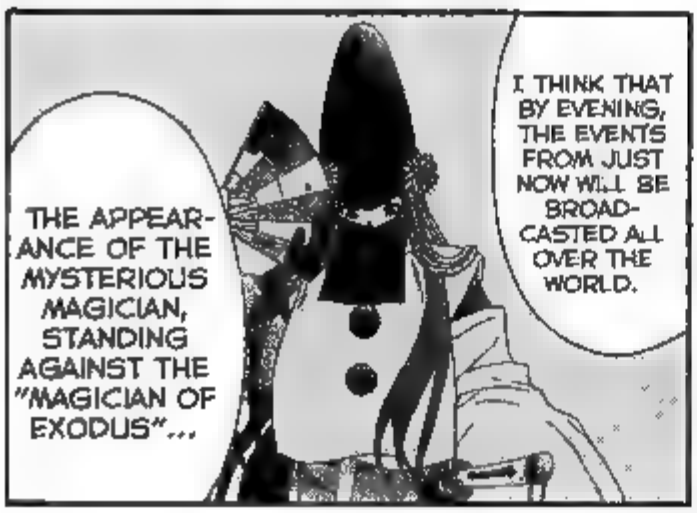
FOR SAMON AND THE OTHERS TO LET MAHIRO WAKE UP.
THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A REASON, BUT...

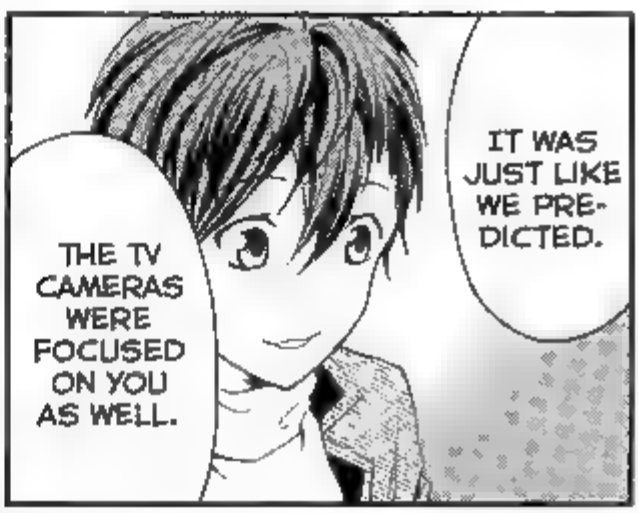
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...

He never listens, after all!
HM...
No matter how you think about it, he's just going to get in their way.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THERE ARE BETTER REASONS FOR NOT LETTING HIM WAKE UP.
PER-HAPS...
SOME SORT OF PROBLEM THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT HAS ARISEN OVER THERE.
A PROBLEM THAT ABSOLUTELY REQUIRES MAHIRO TO SETTLE.
AND ONE...
THAT THEY CAN'T REVEAL TO US EITHER, HUH?
A PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES MAHIRO...

HOW WAS THE REACTION FROM THE CROWD JUST NOW?

LEAVING MAHIRO ASIDE...
カラ


I THINK THAT BY EVENING, THE EVENTS FROM JUST NOW WILL BE BROAD-CASTED ALL OVER THE WORLD.
THE APPEAR-ANCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS MAGICIAN, STANDING AGAINST THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"...


IT WAS JUST LIKE WE PRE-DICTED.
THE TV CAMERAS WERE FOCUSED ON YOU AS WELL.

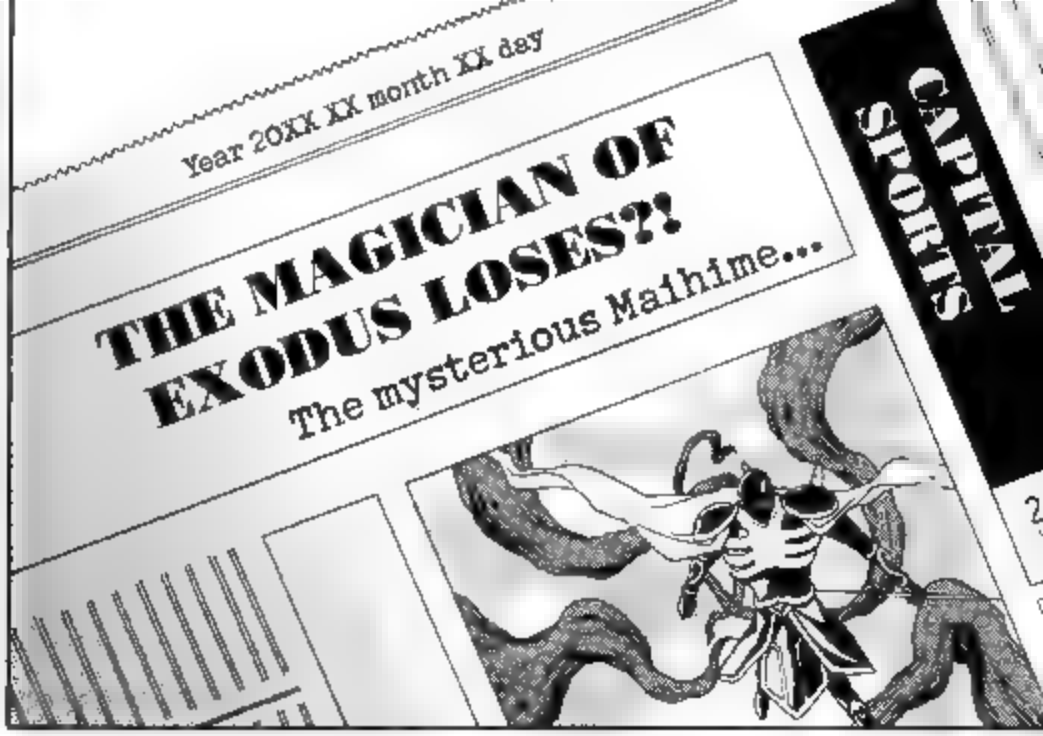
THE MYSTERIOUS MAGICIAN, HUH.
UNLIKE HANEMURA, I CAN'T EXACTLY GIVE OUT A NAME...

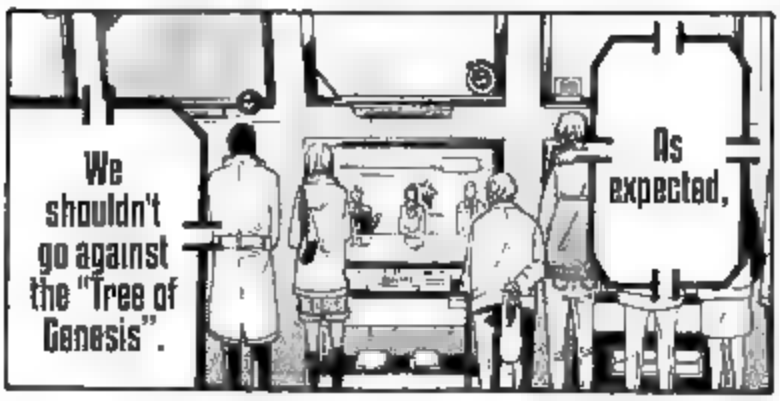
STANDING UP AGAINST THE "MAGIC-IAN OF EXODUS"...
"THE MAGICIAN OF GENESIS," MAYBE?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WHAT SORT OF NAME WILL THE PEOPLE CALL ME?

MY OUTFIT DIDN'T EXACTLY PROCLAIM "WITCH," EITHER.
THAT JUST DOESN'T SOUND VERY GOOD.
THE "WITCH OF GENESIS," PERHAPS?
THEY SHOULD KNOW THAT IT'S A WOMAN, SO...

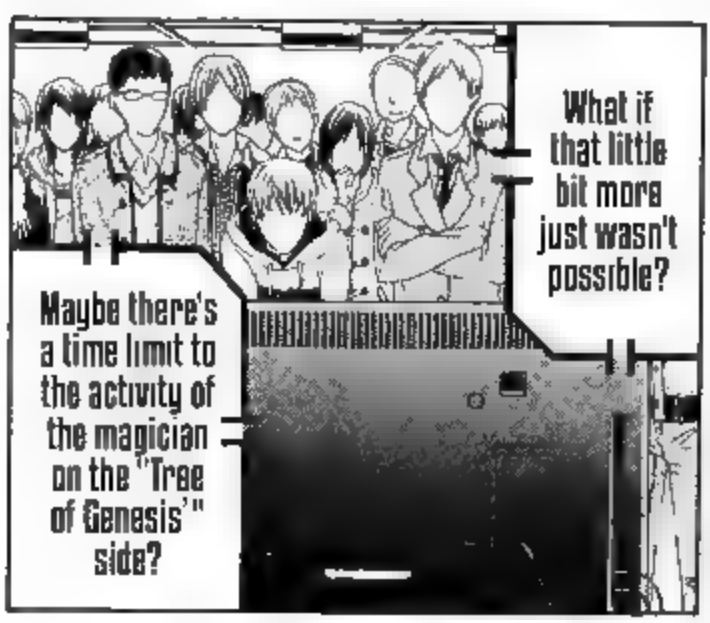
T/N: Maihime = dancer

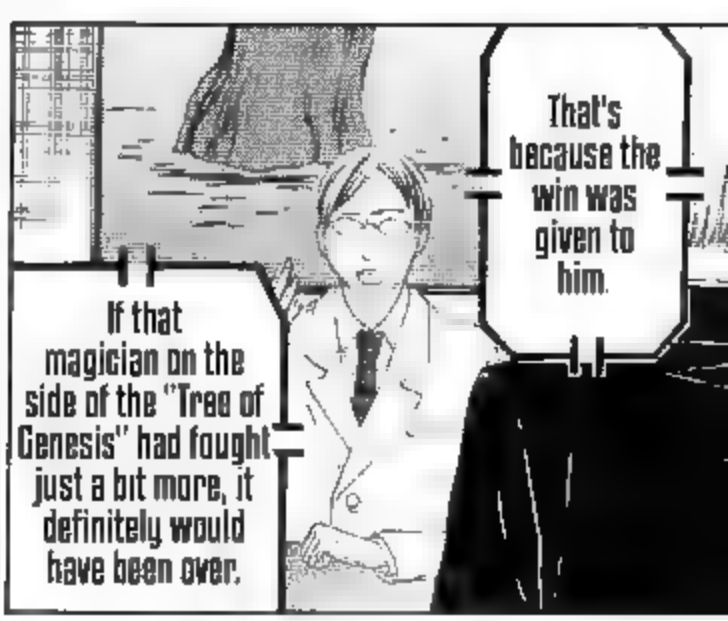

Year 20XX XX month XX day
THE MAGICIAN OF EXODUS LOSES?!
The mysterious Maihime...
CAPITAL SPORTS


We shouldn't go against the "Tree of Genesis".
As expected,

Eyewitness reports! Exclusive new interviews!
A new magician that controls the trees?! Is it an ally or enemy of mankind?

In the end, the destruction of the "Tree" was successful, wasn't it?
Is that so? But putting aside the fact that the "Magician of Exodus" was at a disadvantage,


What if that little bit more just wasn't possible?
Maybe there's a time limit to the activity of the magician on the "Tree of Genesis'" side?

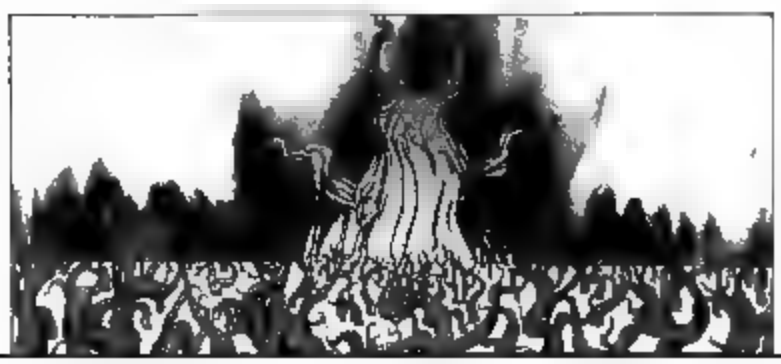

That's because the win was given to him.
If that magician on the side of the "Tree of Genesis" had fought just a bit more, it definitely would have been over.

Too strong! / "Tree of Genesis"!!
(001)
20XX/XX/XX22:15:05
What is that Maihime?!
The "Magician of Genesis"?!

(099)
20XX/XX/XX20:37.04
Isn't she better than the "Magician of Exodus"?

(100)
20XX/XX/XX20:39:41
Wouldn't it be wiser to give in to the "Tree of Genesis"?

It's a monster!!



(200)
20XX/XX/XX23:45:05
Surrender? Don't say such stupid things.

Putting Maihime aside, isn't the "Tree of Genesis" a monster?!

uraxxxGX

Can you really give in to a monster like that?

x month x day

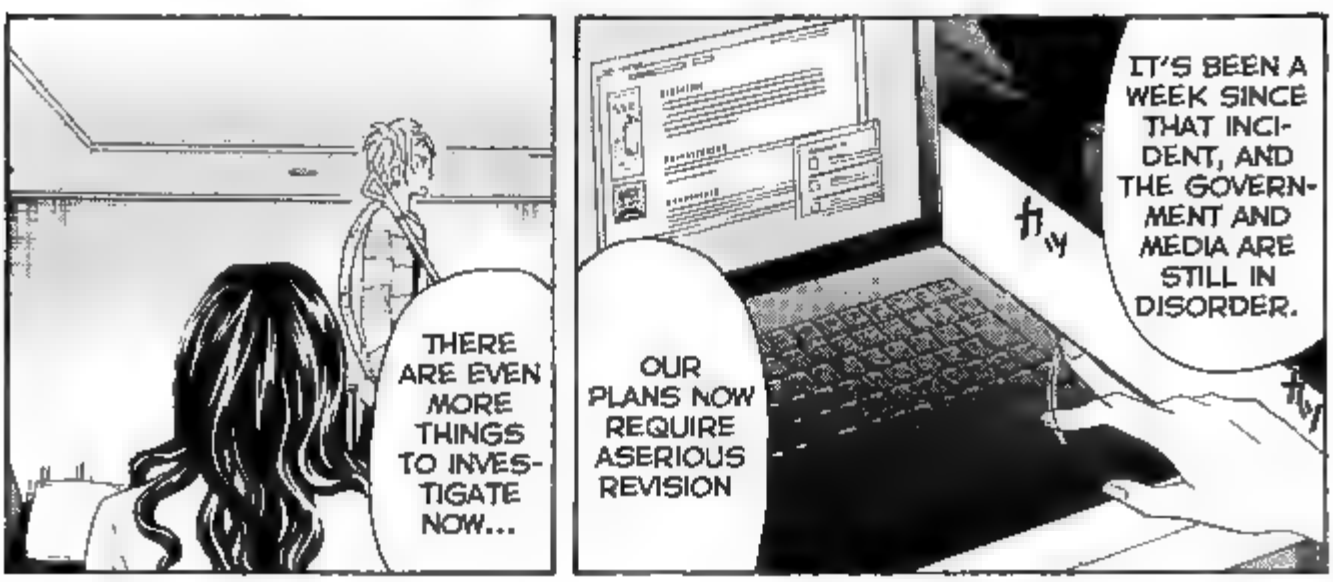
KK-xxx8

Is it really ok to be ruled by a monster like that?

x month x day

I
VE
!!
Just what...
Has that princess done?

THANKS TO THAT PRIN-CESS,
EVERYONE IS BUSY.
WHAT?
ARE YOU ALONE?


THERE ARE EVEN MORE THINGS TO INVES-TIGATE NOW...
OUR PLANS NOW REQUIRE ASERIOUS REVISION
IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE THAT INCI-DENT, AND THE GOVERN-MENT AND MEDIA ARE STILL IN DISORDER.

IS IT NECESSARY TO REVISE THE PLANS?
.....
WHETHER IT WAS BEFORE OR AFTER HAKAZE APPEARED...
PUBLIC OPINION HASN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH, RIGHT?
THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" WAS NEARLY DONE IN BY HAKAZE, BUT...
IT'S NOT LIKE HE LOST COMPLETELY.
ON THE OTHER HAND, HAKAZE IS ON THE SIDE OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS", BUT...
IT'S BEING EFFECTIVELY PORTRAYED AS A MONSTROUS, VIOLENT EXISTENCE.
IN THE END, PUBLIC OPINION WILL STILL VEER TOWARDS FEARING THE "TREE OF GENESIS".
SUPPORT FOR THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" IS ONLY GETTING STRONGER AS WELL.
ISN'T THAT,
IN LINE WITH YOUR ORIGINAL PLANS?

SINCE HAKAZE-CHAN PUBLICIZED THAT DEGREE OF POWER,
THE VOICES FAVORING SUBMISSION ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY LOUDER AS WELL.

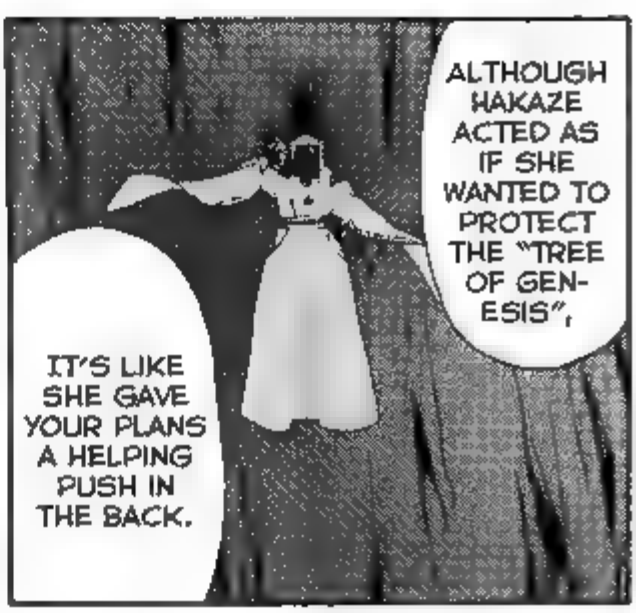
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.

THE PROBLEM HAS ONLY GOTTEN BIGGER WITH HAKAZE'S APPEAR-ANCE.
DOESN'T THAT JUST MAKE PROJECTIONS AND CROWDS EASIER TO MAKE?

THOUGH, WITH THAT,
THE PEOPLE'S NATURAL AVERSION TO THE "TREE OF GENESIS" IS GROWING AS WE...

HOW-EVER...

Indeed...
JUST FROM LOOKING AT THE RESULTS, THAT'S THE CASE, BUT...


ALTHOUGH HAKAZE ACTED AS IF SHE WANTED TO PROTECT THE "TREE OF GEN-ESIS",
IT'S LIKE SHE GAVE YOUR PLANS A HELPING PUSH IN THE BACK.

THAT'S RIGHT!
THAT'S THE PROBLEM!
THE REINS ARE FIRMLY IN HAKAZE'S HANDS, HUH...
ホホホ
THE FLOW OF THE SITUATION MIGHT CHANGE ALTOGETHER DEPENDING ON THE PRINCESS'S WHIMS!
NOW THAT HAKAZE-CHAN HAS MOVED ON HER OWN, OUR CONTROL AMOUNTS TO NOTHING NOW
UP UNTIL NOW, BOTH THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE INFORMATION HAVE ALL BEEN UNDER OUR CONTROL.
ガチャ…
UNABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION ON OUR END IS THE SCARIEST PART OF ALL...

THE INVESTIGATIONS ARE COMPLETE.

IF THE PRINCESS WISHES FOR IT, HANEMURA'S LOCATION CAN QUICKLY BE DEDUCED.
AS EXPECTED, TRACKING MAGIC WAS SKILLFULLY SET ON HANEMURA'S BODY.

IF YOU SHATTERED ABOUT HALF OF HIS BODY, IT COULD POSSIBLY BE REMOVED...

HOW ABOUT DESTROYING IT DIRECTLY WITH THAT?
THEN WITH HANEMURA-KUN'S EXODUS POWER...

IS IT POSSIBLE TO REMOVE THAT MAGIC?

IT'S HOPELESS WITH OUR MAGICAL TECHNIQUES.

I KNOW, RIGHT?
I WOULDN'T RECOM-MEND IT EITHER.
N-N-NO WAY!
HALF MY BODY?! I'D DIE!
HANE-MURA.
CAN YOU DESTROY YOUR OWN BODY LIKE THAT?
AND EVEN IF THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" WERE TO APPEAR TO TRY DESTROYING A "TREE",
SHE'D JUST GET IN THE WAY AGAIN.
WITH THAT MAGIC IN PLACE, NO MATTER WHICH TREE HANEMURA-KUN GOES FOR,
HAKAZE-CHAN WILL KNOW IN ADVANCE.
WE CAN'T GET A READ ON HAKAZE'S MOVEMENTS, BUT HAKAZE CAN CATCH ONTO OURS AT ANY TIME.
WE'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO STAY PASSIVE.

WE'VE COMPLETELY LOST THE INITIATIVE.

IT PAINS ME TO SAY THIS, BUT...
THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO NOW IS TO WAIT FOR THE PRINCESS'S NEXT MOVE.

SHE MAY DECIDE TO MAKE CONTACT ON HER OWN.

THINGS HAVE GOTTEN TOO HOT.
HOLD DOWN THE FORT OVER THERE FOR A BIT LONGER.
WE'LL ARRIVE IN ABOUT 30 MINUTES.
THANKS TO THAT PRINCESS, THINGS ARE GETTING OUT OF HAND.
GREAT CARE MUST BE TAKEN.
BE IT DEFEATING THE "TREE OF GENESIS" OR ELIMINATING THE "TREE OF EXODUS",
WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER THAN JUST RELYING ON THE KUSARIBE'S MAGIC FOR PROTECTION?
WHY DON'T YOU OPENLY BRING ALONG SOME SP OR GUARD CARS?
THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE AFTER YOU NOW, AS WELL.
THEY ARE INDEED.
EVEN IF MORE PEOPLE ARE AFTER ME, THERE'S NO DANGER AS LONG AS I'M PROTECTED BY MAGIC.
A BLUFF LIKE THAT WOULD JUST MAKE IT HARDER TO ACT.
WITHIN A MAGICAL DEFENSE, EVEN IF WE WERE STRUCK DIRECTLY BY A BOMB...
SOME OF THE ONES WHO GET CLOSE WOULD BE RESTRAINED BY SEEING THAT, RIGHT?

...?!
WHAT HAPPENED?!
WERE WE ATTACKED?!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE'RE PROTECED BY MAGIC,
YOU FORGET THAT IT'S MEANING-LESS WHEN IT COMES TO HER.

SO THE PRINCESS STOPPED US...
BY REINFORCING HER MAGIC?
TETSUMA.
OPEN THE BACK DOOR.
YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY SOME-WHERE, RIGHT?
I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE LATE ON MY ACCOUNT.

...IT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO YOU,
PRIN-CESS.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, HAYAKAWA.
I'VE HEARD OF YOUR ACTIVITIES.

FORGIVE ME.

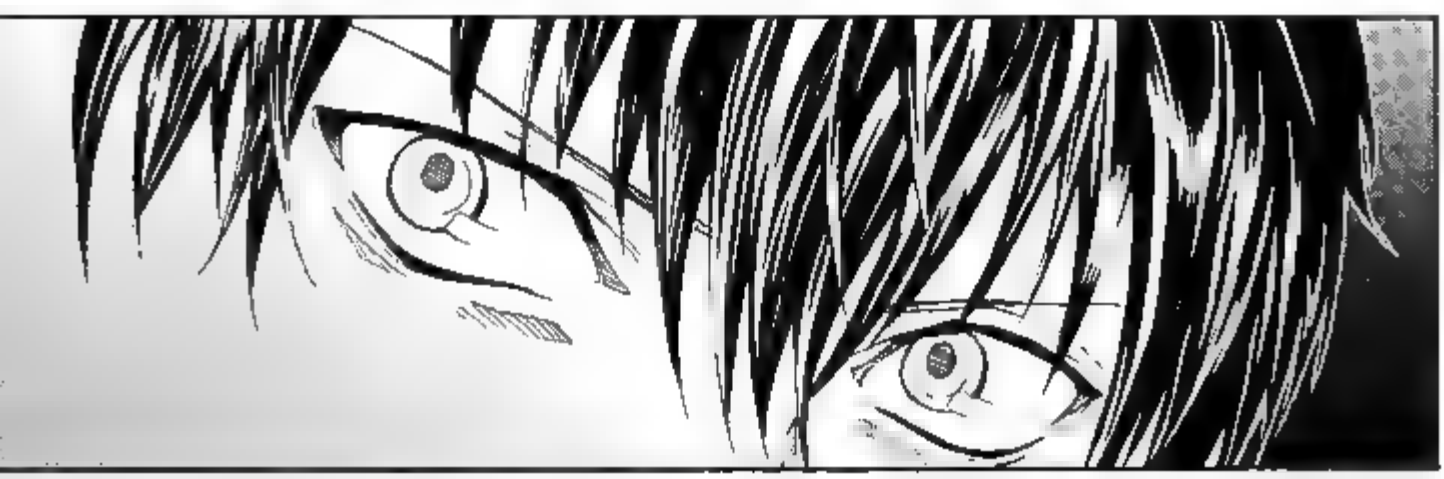
MY APOLO-GIES FOR THE UNAN-NOUNCED VISIT.
HOWEVER, THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I WANT TO ASK YOU.

I'M HAPPY TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU, AS WELL.
YOU CAME AT THE PERFECT TIME.

SHALL WE GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT?
WELL, THEN.

NO MATTER WHAT IT PERTAINS TO, I TRUST THAT YOU'LL TELL ME EVERYTHING WITHOUT HOLDING BACK.



THAT...
FEELING IS MUTUAL.

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

by SHIRODAIRA Kyou
and SAIZAKI Ren

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Zetsuen no Tempest ch 28

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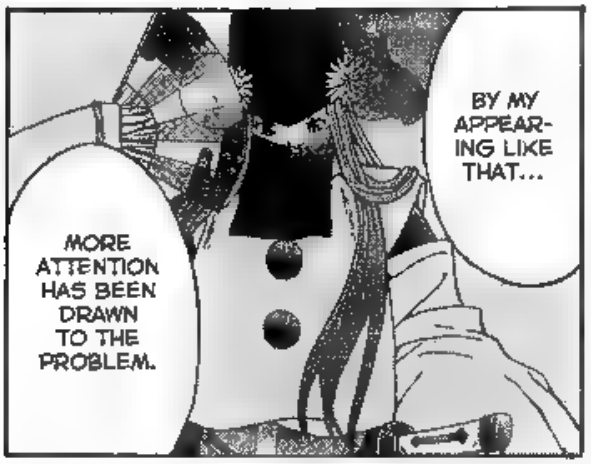
Zetsuen no Tempest

Chapter 29 - Spring and Carnage

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

I'LL JUST ASK DIRECTLY.
WHY ARE YOU GETTING IN THE WAY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS",
AND DOING THINGS THAT SEEM TO INTERFERE WITH OUR PLANS?

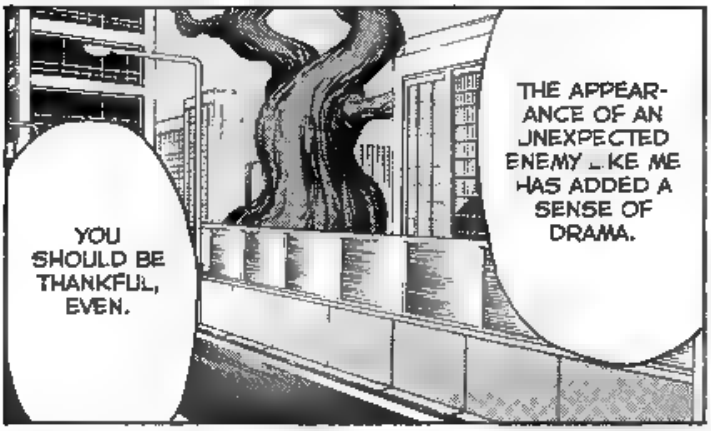
MORE-
OVER,


BY MY
APPEAR-
ING LIKE
THAT...
MORE
ATTENTION
HAS BEEN
DRAWN
TO THE
PROBLEM.

IT WASN'T
MY INTENT
TO INTER-
FERE...
THE VOICES
IN SUPPORT
OF THE
"MAGICIAN
OF EXODUS"
ARE NOW
LOUDER NOW
THAN EVER
BEFORE,
RIGHT?

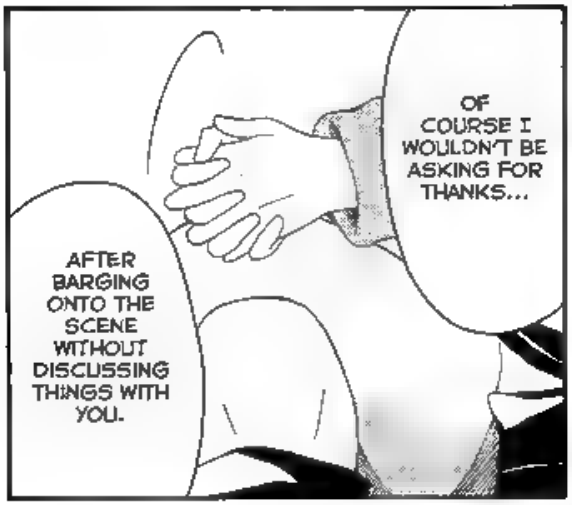
THAT
IS...
INDEED
THE
CASE,
BUT

DON'T
YOU THINK
THAT'S IN
LINE WITH
YOUR
PLANS?


THE APPEAR-
ANCE OF AN
UNEXPECTED
ENEMY LIKE ME
HAS ADDED A
SENSE OF
DRAMA.
YOU
SHOULD BE
THANKFUL,
EVEN.

PLUS,
JUST
CARRYING
ON LIKE
BEFORE,
WITH THE
TREES JUST
GETTING
DESTROYED
BY THE
"MAGICIAN
OF EXODUS",
IS LACKING
SOME
EXCITEMENT,
NO?

...


OF COURSE I WOULDN'T BE ASKING FOR THANKS...
AFTER BARGING ONTO THE SCENE WITHOUT DISCUSSING THINGS WITH YOU.

DON'T MAKE SUCH A BITTER FACE.
I'M KIDDING.

THERE ARE 2 REASONS...
FOR ME TO HAVE DONE SUCH A THING.

THINGS HAVE BEEN MOVING WITHOUT MY KNOW-LEDGE UP UNTIL NOW, AFTER ALL.

REGAINING MY GRIP ON THE SITUATION REQUIRED STIRRING YOU GUYS UP A BIT.

ONE IS...
SO THAT CONTROL OF THE SITUATION COMES WITHIN MY GRASP.

IF YOU HAD JUST ASKED NORMALLY,
I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED.

WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR COMPOSURE, MISTAKES TEND TO HAPPEN.
AND IT BECOMES HARDER TO HIDE THINGS.

TIGHT LIPS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO LOOSEN, ALSO, RIGHT?

EVEN NOW,
AREN'T YOU INTENTIONALLY HIDING SOMETHING QUITE IMPORTANT FROM ME?

IS THAT SO?

SO...
WHAT IS THE OTHER REASON?

IT'S STILL NOT EVEN WORTH TALKING ABOUT FIGHTING AGAINST THE MAIN BODY OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS."
HE'S GAINED SOME CONFI-DENCE AND POWER, BUT...
AS HE IS, HE CANNOT TRIUMPH OVER THE "TREE OF GENESIS".
THE OTHER REASON IS .N ORDER TO TEACH HANEMURA.
IF HE DOESN'T CONTINUE REACHING HIGHER LEVELS,
THEN WHEN TIME COMES, HE'LL EASILY BE CRUSHED BY THE GREAT TREE.
SINCE IT WAS A FIGHT OUT OF THE BLUE BEFORE,
YOU COULD SAY THAT HE COULDN'T PUT FORTH HIS FULL POWER, BUT...

BATTLE IS OFTEN AN IRREGULAR THING.
I WANT HANEMURA TO LEVEL UP.
YOU SAY THAT SO EASILY...

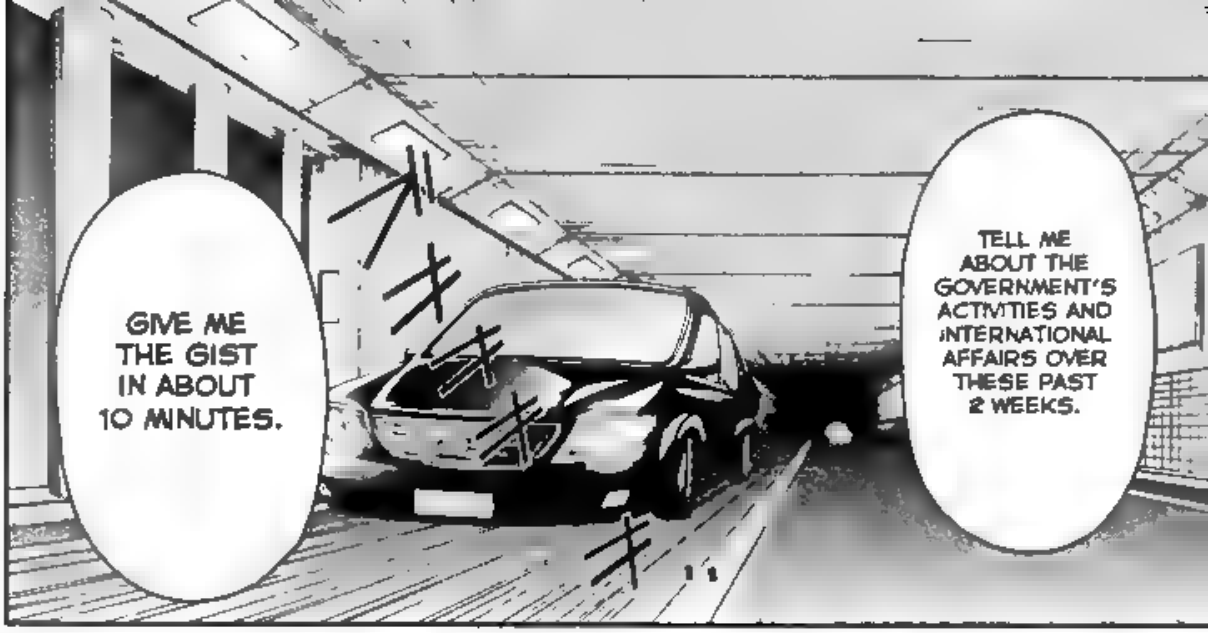
IN 3 DAYS, HAVE HANEMURA DESCEND AGAIN TO DESTROY A PORTION OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS".
I'LL LEAVE THE LOCATION UP TO YOU.

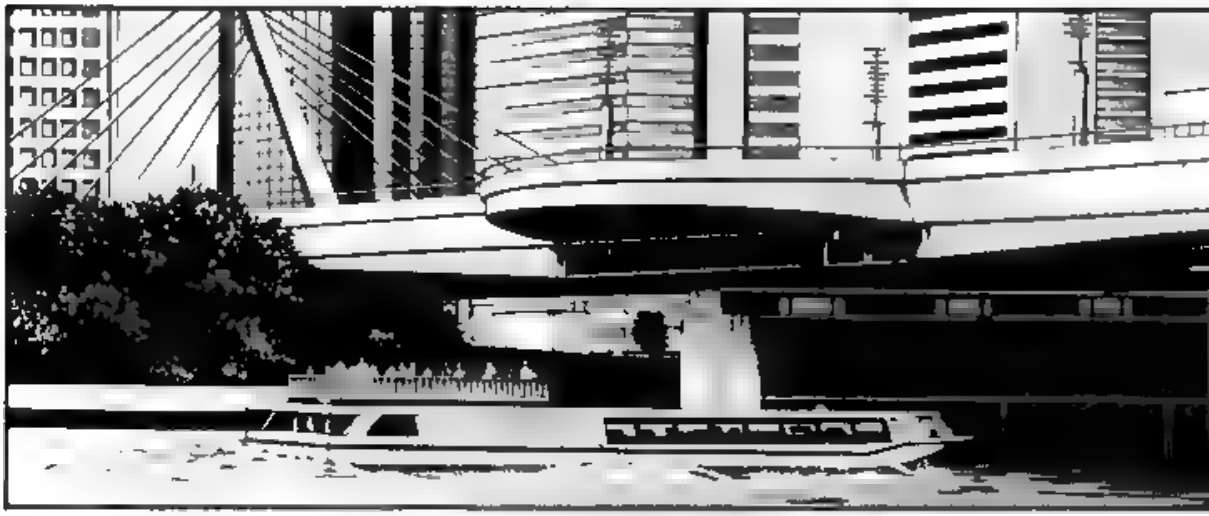
LIKE LAST TIME, I'LL FINISH IT BY LETTING HANEMURA HAVE THE WIN.
BUT BEFORE THAT, I INTEND TO THOROUGHLY PUT HIM THROUGH HIS PACES.

SO AT THE VERY LEAST, MAKE HIM INCREASE THE VARIATION IN HIS ATTACKS AND MOVEMENTS.

I'LL APPEAR AND WE'LL FIGHT AGAIN LIKE BEFORE.
IF HE CAN'T HOLD HIS OWN IN BATTLE, THEN HIS LACK OF POWER WILL BECOME ESTABLISHED.

There's no reasons to take advantage of at all...
I would have been much better if she had just stayed as blinded by love as she was.
...
Heh...
YOU NOTICED?
THANKS TO YOU.
WHAT'S WRONG?
DID YOU WANT ME TO BE A BIT MORE BLINDED BY LOVE?
Princess...
She's become stronger than before, in a different sense...
WELL THEN...


GIVE ME THE GIST IN ABOUT 10 MINUTES.
TELL ME ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OVER THESE PAST 2 WEEKS.



ARE YOU REALLY IN A POSITION TO MAKE SUCH AN EASY-GOING GREETING?!
HI THERE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES ON MY SIDE, TOO!
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, ALL OF A SUDDEN MAILING ME WITH A PLACE AND TIME TO MEET, SAYING TO PLEASE COME ALONE!
PLUS, YOU GAVE ME LESS THAN 2 HOURS NOTICE!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALONE, HUH, YOSHINO-KUN?
.....
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT HAKAZE-SAN'S INTENTIONS AND WHAT TO DO FROM NOW ON!

TO PREVENT YOU FROM SIMPLY DOING AS YOU PLEASE FROM NOW ON,
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN OUT OF THE QUESTION TO HAVE ARRANGED SOLDIERS OR MAGICIANS OR WHATNOT IN ADVANCE TO SUBDUE YOU, RIGHT?

IT'S EASIER TO TALK THAT WAY, RIGHT?
YEAH,

DID YOU REALLY THINK I WOULD COME ALONE AS WELL?
NONE-THELESS,

YOU WOULDN'T DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD DISPLEASE HAKAZE-SAN LIKE THAT, RIGHT?

SO I FIGURED THAT YOU WOULD INDEED COME ALONE.

Not cute at all.
As I thought,

IF I ACTUALLY HAD HAKAZE-SAN WITH ME AND WE FOUND OUT YOU WERE PLANNING SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT'D BE TROUBLE FOR YOU, RIGHT?
PLUS, YOU'RE SO BUSY DEALING WITH THE OUT-SIDE AT PRE-SENT THAT IT'D BE QUITE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO PRE-PARE SUCH NUMBERS.

EVEN IF I WERE ATTACKED BY A MILITARY SQUAD OR A MAGICIAN OF SAMON-SAN'S LEVEL
I WOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD MY OWN.
HAKAZE-SAN HAS ME WEAR A NUMBER OF SPECIALLY-MADE TALISMANS AT ALL TIMES.
MORE-OVER,
THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF USEFUL MAGIC.
SO THE POWER CANNOT EVEN BE COMPARED TO THE ONES THAT I USED BEFORE.
THEY'RE ATTUNED TO MY EXCLUSIVE USE,
YEAH.
THAT'S SPECIAL-LY-MADE INDEED.
HOW ARE THINGS ON YOUR END?
SO,
YOU'VE HAD HER GIVE YOU PLENTY OF NICE THINGS.
WELL DONE...
IT JUST SOUNDS BAD WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
NO, NO!

I THINK THINGS ARE PROBABLY IN CHAOS NOW...
WELL...
THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS GOING ON.
IF I GO ALONG WITH YOUR WISHES AND TELL YOU ABOUT THE SITUATION TO A CERTAIN EXTENT,
WILL YOU TELL ME ABOUT THINGS ON YOUR END AS WELL?
YOU DIDN'T CALL ME OUT OF SIMPLE KINDNESS, RIGHT?

...
HOW COULD SOMETHING LIKE THAT DRAW SO MUCH SUPPORT?
SUPPORT FOR THE "TREE OF GENESIS" IS STILL STRONG, HUH
INTER-NATION-ALLY...
ARE THOSE THE WORDS OF THE PRINCESS OF THE "TREE OF GENESIS"?
ARE YOU THE PRINCESS OF A TENTACLED MONSTER, THEN?
IT WAS CLEARLY SEEN AS JUST SOME SORT OF TENTACLED MONSTER BEFORE.

SO THE SITUATION IS AS I EXPLAINED.

ペラ
I'M JUST SPEAKING OBJECTIVELY.

BUT EVEN IF THEY WERE TO GO ABOUT SUPPORTING THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS", THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN ACTUALLY DESTROY IT, THEY DON'T KNOW HIS TRUE IDENTITY OR WHETHER HE CAN ACTUALLY WIN.
We don't need the tree!
THERE ARE PEOPLE IN EVERY COUNTRY THAT WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE "TREE OF GENESIS"
The tree is dangerous!
We will fight until the end!
Take the world back from the tree!
THEY ARE MOVING CAUTIOUSLY.
WE WON'T BE RULED BY A MONSTER
WE WILL DEFEAT THE TREE WITH OUR OWN HANDS!

IN HANEMURA'S NEXT BATTLE
IT MIGHT BE BEST FOR THE "TREE OF GENESIS" TO SHOW SOME WEAKNESSES.
THEY AREN'T THAT FAR OFF.
MOREOVER, THERE ARE SUSPICIONS THAT I PLANNED THE DISTURBANCE THIS TIME.
SO I'M BEING LOOKED UPON WITH DIFFERENT EYES, AS WELL.
IF YOU COULD DO THAT,
IT WOULD BE QUITE A RELIEF FOR OUR SIDE.
IF HANEMURA IS DOMINATED TOO OVERWHELMINGLY, THAT MAY VERY WELL SWAY OPINIONS TO AN EXTREME.
IT WOULD BE TROUBLESOME IF THE "TREE OF GENESIS" GAINED TOO MUCH SUPPORT, AFTER ALL.
RELAX.
I DON'T INTEND TO DO ANYTHING RECKLESSLY FROM NOW ON.
OF ALL OF YOUR EFFORTS.
I WANT TO BE RESPECTFUL...

RIGHT NOW, AS WE SPEAK,
YOSHINO SHOULD BE CONFIRMING THE SAME INFORMATION FROM FRAULEIN YAMAMOTO.
BY THE WAY,
HAHA,
I WOULDN'T TRY TO PULL SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
IF THERE ARE ANY LARGE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE NEWS ON THAT END AND THAT FROM YOU—
I MIGHT JUST HAVE TO START DOING AS I PLEASE, AGAIN
wouldn't be able to get our stories straight in advance?
anything untrue
need to worry about that end.

IF THERE ARE TWO KUSARIBE PEOPLE OF NATSUMURA'S LEVEL...
THOSE CONDITIONS WILL BE MET.

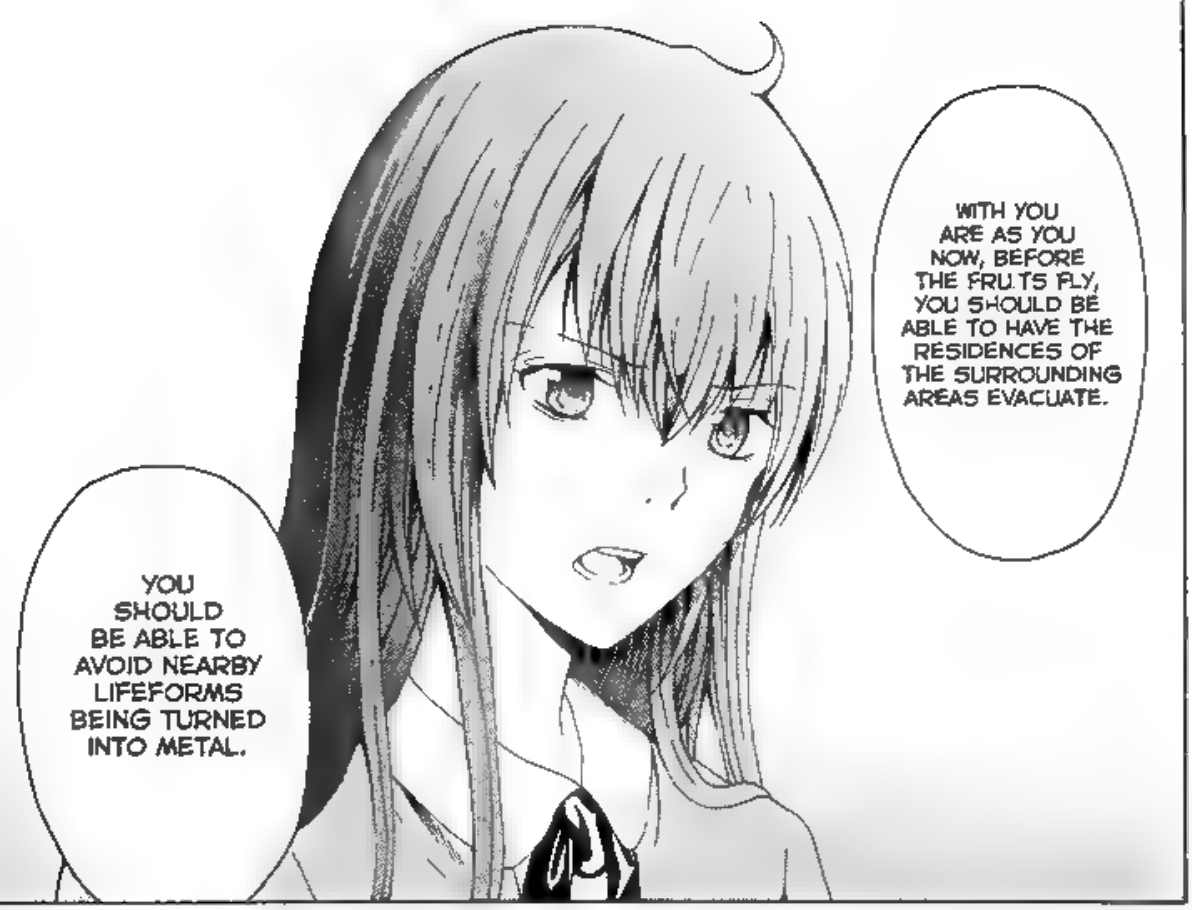
IN EACH LOCATION I'VE ARRANGED THINGS SUCH THAT ONCE A SET MAGICAL CONDITION IS SATISFIED, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO FLY AT ONCE.

I'VE ALREADY BEEN TO EACH SPOT AND CONFIRMED THE POSITION.

HAYAKAWA ...

SAMON-DONO NEEDED THE COMBINED POWER OF THE CLAN,
AND A YEAR OF PREPARATIONS TO FINALLY MAKE THE FRUIT FLY
AND YET SO EASILY, YOU...

THAT'S WHY I'M CALLED THE PRINCESS, YOU KNOW.


WITH YOU ARE AS YOU NOW, BEFORE THE FRUITS FLY, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE THE RESIDENCES OF THE SURROUNDING AREAS EVACUATE.
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO AVOID NEARBY LIFEFORMS BEING TURNED INTO METAL.

...

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, YOU...

IN ORDER TO COMPLETELY RESURRECT THE "TREE OF EXODUS",
DISCOVERING AND RELEASING THE FRUITS WAS A PRESSING ISSUE..

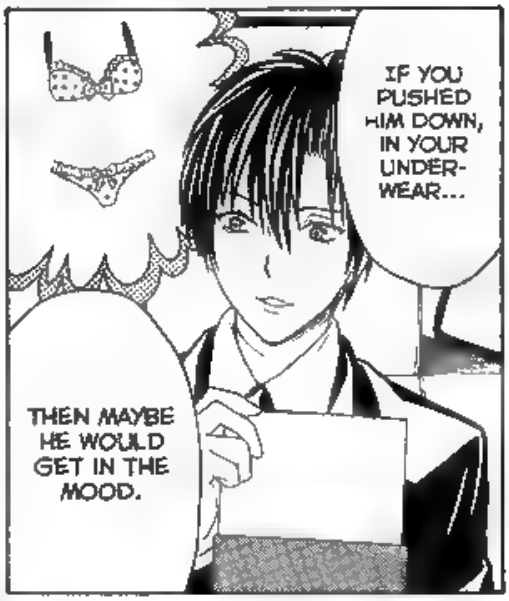
DID THAT GIRLFRIEND COMPLAIN?

WOULD A MAN WITH A GIRL-FRIEND ..
REALLY BE IN THE MOOD TO GO ON A HONEYMOON TRIP LIKE THAT?

JUST WHAT DID YOU THINK YOSHINO AND I WERE DOING IN ALL THOSE DIFFERENT PLACES?
IT WAS HARDLY THAT, RIGHT?

I THOUGHT IT WAS LIKE A HONEYMOON TOUR FOR YOU...

YOSHINO WOULDN'T BE IN THE MOOD.
EVEN IF SHE DIDN'T COMPLAIN,


IF YOU PUSHED HIM DOWN, IN YOUR UNDER-WEAR...
THEN MAYBE HE WOULD GET IN THE MOOD.

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?
IS THAT SOMETHING A DECENT MAN WOULD SAY?!

Master already realized...
Not to dead Fuwa Aika is Takigawa Yoshino's girlfriend?

By the looks of things...

This man relied upon by the capital really is of a different caliber..

One can't act rashly against this one.

THERE'S ONE MORE THING. .
THAT I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU.

SO...
HAYAKAWA,

WHAT IS IT?

WHY...
DID YOU ALLOW MAHIRO TO AWAKE?

IT'S BECAUSE WE SUSPECT...
THAT TAKIGAWA YOSHINO IS THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS".

YOSHINO -KUN.
I PERSONALLY DON'T THINK YOU ARE.
THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"?
ARE YOU...
SINCE THAT'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE REASON THAT YOU WOULD HAVE AWAKENED MAHIRO.
HAKAZE-SAN AND I HIT UPON THAT POSSIBILITY JUST YESTERDAY,
YOU'RE NOT SURPRISED, DESPITE BEING ASKED ALL OF A SUDDEN.
HMM?

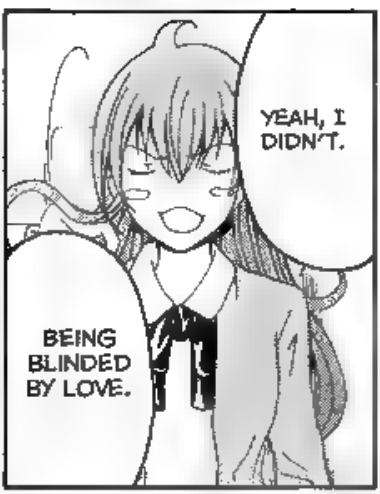
YOUR ABILITY TO VIEW THINGS OBJECTIVELY...
IS ALMOST SICKENING, YOU KNOW?
NAH.
AWAKENING MAHIRO...
AS TO PREDICT HOW I WOULD ACT, RIGHT?
IF YOU PUT THAT TOGETHER WITH MAHIRO AND THEN LOOK AT THE SITUATION,
THEN THAT SUSPICION NATURALLY ARISES...
FOR AWHILE NOW,
I'VE NOTICED THAT MY INFLUENCE ON HAKAZE-SAN HAS BEEN GROWING.
SO...

WHAT DID HAKAZE-SAN SAY ABOUT THAT SUSPICION?

YOU'RE NOT SURPRISED.

DID YOU THINK THAT I WOULDN'T REALIZE ...
SOMTHING LIKE THAT?

TO BEGIN WITH...


YEAH, I DIDN'T.
BEING BLINDED BY LOVE.

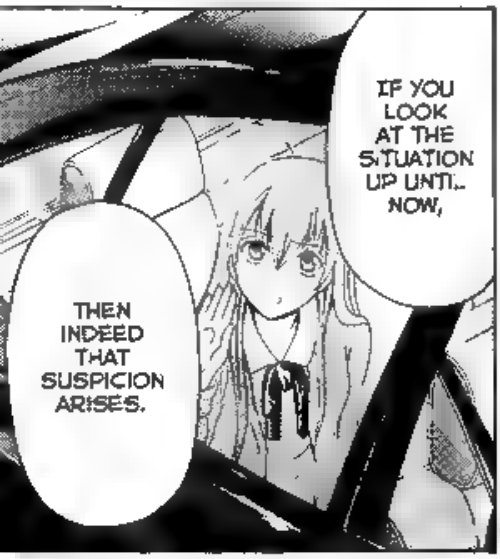
YOU DIDN'T, RIGHT,
HAVING BEEN BLINDED BY LOVE?

WAS TAKIGAWA YOSHINO...
THE ONE THAT REALIZED IT?

IF I HADN'T BEEN LOVES-TRUCK,
THEN THE SUSPICION THAT YOSHINO WAS THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" COULDN'T HAVE COME ABOUT TO BEGIN WITH.

DEFEAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS"!
WE'LL FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"!
HAD SUSPECTED THE EXISTENCE OF SOMEONE THAT MADE UP FOR HANEMURA'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WEAKNESS.
THE "HEART OF EXODUS," IN OTHER WORDS.
We support the Magician of Exodus Tree of Exodus!

I ALSO ...
WE SUPPORT


IF YOU LOOK AT THE SITUATION UP UNTIL NOW,
THEN INDEED THAT SUSPICION ARISES.

I SAY THAT, BUT THE ONE THAT REALIZED IT MIGHT BE YOSHINO.
WAS YOSHINO HIMSELF.

AFTER ALL, DUE TO YOSHINO'S EXISTENCE,
AN UNFAVORABLE SITUATION FOR THE "TREE OF GENESIS" HAS BEEN CREATED.
SO,
WHAT OF IT?
IS TAKIGAWA YOSHINO...
THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS"?
Hmph

SO NO MATTER WHAT I SAY, YOU'D JUST TREAT ME AS IF I WERE BEING MANIPULATED AND HAD NO ABILITY TO JUDGE.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S THAT ORE OF SUSPICION THAT I'M BEING MANIPULATED BY YOSHINO,
EVEN IF I WERE TO DENY IT, THERE'D BE NO PERSUASIVE POWER.
TRUE, BUT...
THAT'S ...
Carry the "Heart of Exodus"?
Could someone that would cry for his dead lover...
I DON'T THINK YOSHINO IS CARRIER OF THE "HEART OF EXODUS," CAPABLE OF DESTROYING EVERYTHING WHILE REMAINING COLDLY UNMOVED.
FROM MY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE...

YOUR SUSPICION IS NOT UNFOUNDED.
I MYSELF CANNOT PROVE THAT I'M NOT BEING CONTROLLED BY YOSHINO.
BUT...
HOWEVER,
THUS,
FROM NOW ON,
THINK OF OUR ACTIVITIES WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOSHINO MIGHT BE THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS".

FOR MY PART I WILL EARNESTLY LEND AN EAR TO THOSE OPINIONS.
AND IF THERE ARE ANY OBJEC-TIONS, SPEAK UP.
IN PARTICU-LAR, PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO MY DECI-SIONS
PRIN-CESS,
HAVE YOU INDEED DECIDED THAT THE "TREE OF GENESIS" SHOULD BE DEFEATED?
IF YOU WERE TO PRESENT A SUFFICIENTLY CONVINC.NG ARGUMENT WHY "YOU SHOULDN'T DEFEAT IT",
WE'LL PROTECT THE "TREE OF GENESIS"
PROTECT PEACE
THEN NO MATTER WHAT YOSHINO SAID, I WOULD CHANGE TO A PATH OF PROTECTING THE "TREE OF GENESIS."
Society will live together with the "Tree of Genesis"!!
I'M MOVING IN THAT DIREC-TION AT PRESENT, BUT...

Does the Princess really think that way?
Or is she just saying that so as not to antagonize us?

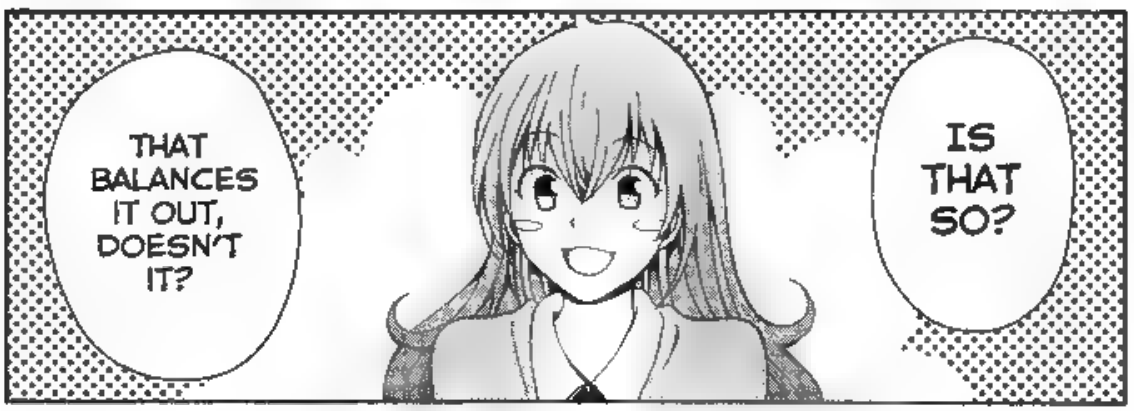
I REALLY MEAN THAT.
YOSHINO CONCURS, AS WELL.

Tak gawa Yoshino again

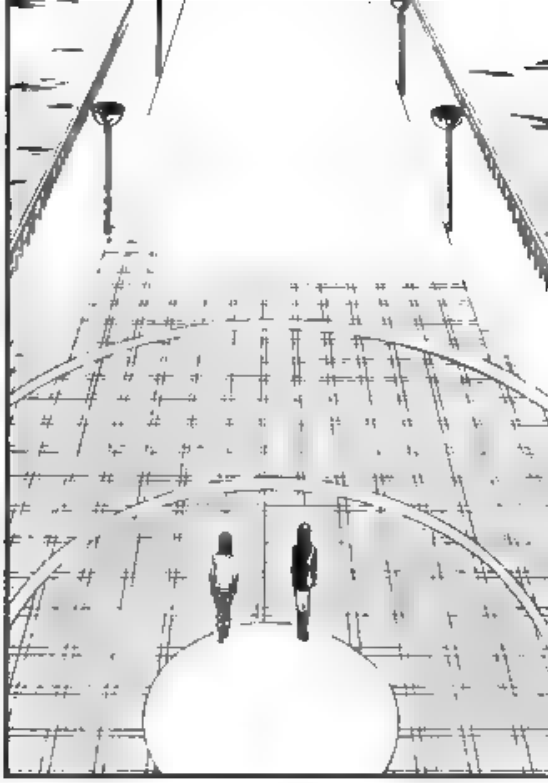
There is no doubt...
That this young man has a huge influence on the Princess.

NOT JUST FOR YOU, THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE PROTECTING THE "TREE OF GENESIS," TO WANT TO DEFEAT IT
BUT TO SUGGEST THAT WE, WHO ATTEMPTED TO DEFEAT IT, SHOULDN'T?

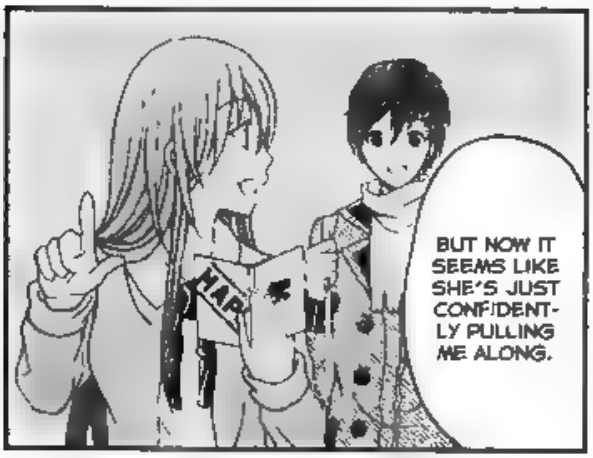
PRINCESS,
ISN'T THIS STRANGE?


IS THAT SO?
THAT BALANCES IT OUT, DOESN'T IT?

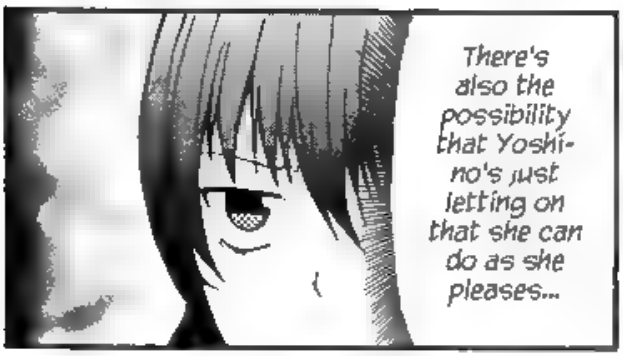
SO WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, HAKA-ZE-SAN IS CURRENT-LY...
JUST DOING WHATEV-ER YOU WANT?



MMM...
I FEEL LIKE SHE'S ALREADY PAST THAT.


BUT NOW IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S JUST CONFIDENT-LY PULLING ME ALONG.

BEFORE, SHE WOULD LEAN ON ME WHEN SHE FELT INSECURE,
AND SHE'D HAVE HER WEAK MOMENTS LIKE THAT.

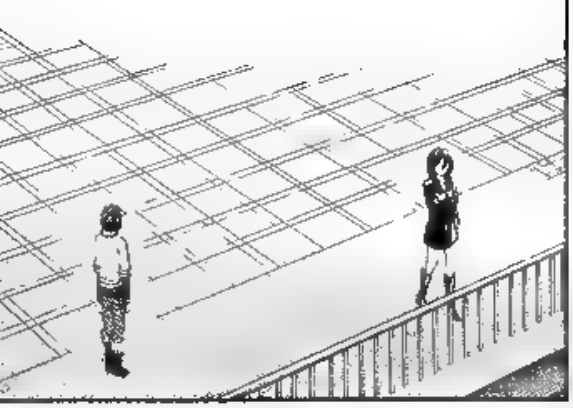

There's also the possibility that Yoshi-no's just letting on that she can do as she pleases...

UMM...
IT'D BE PRETTY BAD IF SHE WERE WRONG, RIGHT?

SHE MUST KNOW WHAT SHE NEEDS TO DO.
PUTTING ASIDE WHETHER IT'S RIGHT OR WRONG.

HAKA-ZE-SAN ...
FOUND OUT THAT YOUR GIRL-FRIEND WAS FUWA AIKA, RIGHT?
AND BECAUSE OF THAT, THE SITUATION CHANGED DRAMATI-CALLY,
RIGHT?
WAS THAT BAD?
HMM...
I THINK IT WAS ULTIMATELY UNAVOIDABLE, THOUGH...
あーはは
ahahaha
RIGHT?
SO IN THE END...
AS IF YOU SHOULD BE LAUGHING!
WAH, I'M SORRY!

EVERYTHING IS BROUGHT TOGETHER BY FUWA AIKA'S DEATH.
AND THEN YOU CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS" ...
KILLED HER FOR THE SAKE OF THIS VERY MOMENT.
THAT'S ALSO AS IF YOU...
HAD PLANNED IT, AS THE "MAGICIAN OF EXODUS".
NO MATTER THE REASON,
I WOULDN'T KILL AIKA-CHAN.



A HERO THAT WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SACRIFICE ONE LOVER FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD...
WOULD BE TROUBLING...

MYTHO-LOGICALLY SPEAKING,
THE "TREE OF EXODUS" DEFEATING THE "TREE OF GENESIS" IS THE CORRECT OUTCOME.

BECAUSE THE GOD-LIKE SERPENTS AND DRAGONS...
ARE USUALLY DEFEATED BY HEROES.

MMHMM.

STOP AROUND HERE.
I'LL GET OFF.

HAYAKAWA, I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN TOGETHER WITH A SUSPICIOUS LOOKING PERSON LIKE ME,
IN ANY PLACE WITH A LOT OF PEOPLE.

PRINCESS...

チカ
チカ

キキ

I CAN'T DENY THAT YOU POSSESS POWER THAT WILL DETERMINE THE PATH OF OUR CIVILIZATION.
BUT YOU'D BE BEST OFF...
NOT THINKING THAT WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS THE BEST ANSWER TO SAVING THE WORLD.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MAGIC, BUT...
OUR LIVES AND OUR HEARTS AREN'T SO SIMPLE,
SUCH THAT SPELLS AND PRAYERS CAN SOLVE ALL OUR PROBLEMS.
NO MATTER WHICH CHOICE YOU MAKE,
LARGE SACRIFICES WILL ACCOMPANY IT.

EVEN WHAT YOU BELIEVE TO BE CORRECT,
MAY BE MISTAKEN WHEN VIEWED FROM ANOTHER POSITION.
THE VALUE OF THE KINDNESS AND JUSTICE THAT YOU BELIEVE IN...
ISN'T SUCH A SPEC-TACULAR THING.
YOU'RE STILL A CHILD.
Humph

I'M A CHILD.
YUP, THAT'S RIGHT.
COM-PARED TO YOU GUYS,
I HARDLY KNOW ANY-THING.
I DON'T THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD OR WHATNOT
IF I COULD,
I'D JUST WANT TO SPEND EACH DAY CUDDLED UP TO YOSHINO'S SOFT LITTLE EAR.

BUT,
EVEN IF I WERE TO DO THAT,
YOU'D STILL BLAME ME, RIGHT?
HAYA-KAWA,
...
IF SUCH A PATH EXISTS, THAT IS.
IF YOU CONSID-ER YOUR-SELF AN ADULT,
THEN LEAD ME TO THE PATH THAT ALL WOULD ACCEPT AS CORRECT.

PRIN-
CESS...
DO YOU
THINK
THAT...
THE
WORLD
CAN'T
TURN OUT
FOR THE
BETTER?
NO,
NO.
I DON'T
HAVE SUCH
IRRESPONSI-
BLE
THOUGHTS.
"NOW MY
CHARMS
ARE ALL
O'ERTHROWN,
AND WHAT
STRENGTH
I HAVE'S
MINE OWN"
IF I
WERE TO
HONEST-
LY EX-
PRESS
HOW I
FEEL...
MARGIN NOTE: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, THE TEMPEST
YOU
DON'T
KNOW?
IT'S
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
MOST
PEOPLE
WOULDN'T
KNOW, I
GUESS.
WHAT'S
THAT?

ANY LEADS INTO FINDING FUWA AIKA'S KILLER?
HAS ANYTHING COME UP?

THAT'S RIGHT, HAYAKAWA.

NO...
NONE AT ALL.

I'VE THOUGHT OF SOME-THING.
THEN...

IF THINGS GO WELL,
MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT WHO THE CULPRIT IS.

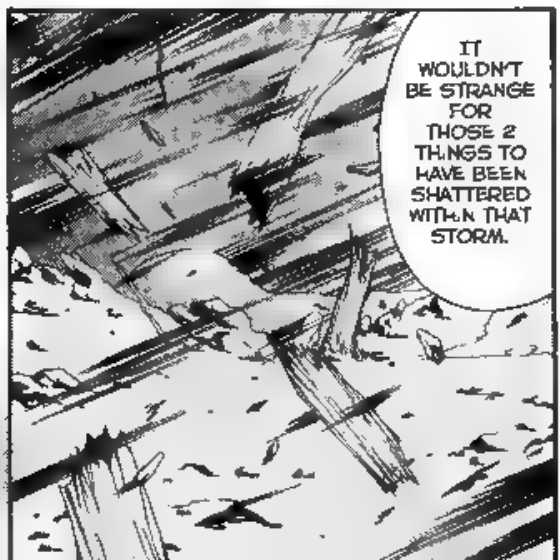
THUS,

AND THE WOODEN "DOLL" THAT I USED TO COMMUNICATE WITH MAHIRO ...
CAN YOU HAVE THEM RETRIEVED?
SAMON'S "BARREL" FROM THE BASE OF MT. FUJI,

BUT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CONDITIONS AT THE BASE OF MT. FUJI, RIGHT?
YEAH, YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT THEM.

THE "BARREL"
AND "DOLL"?

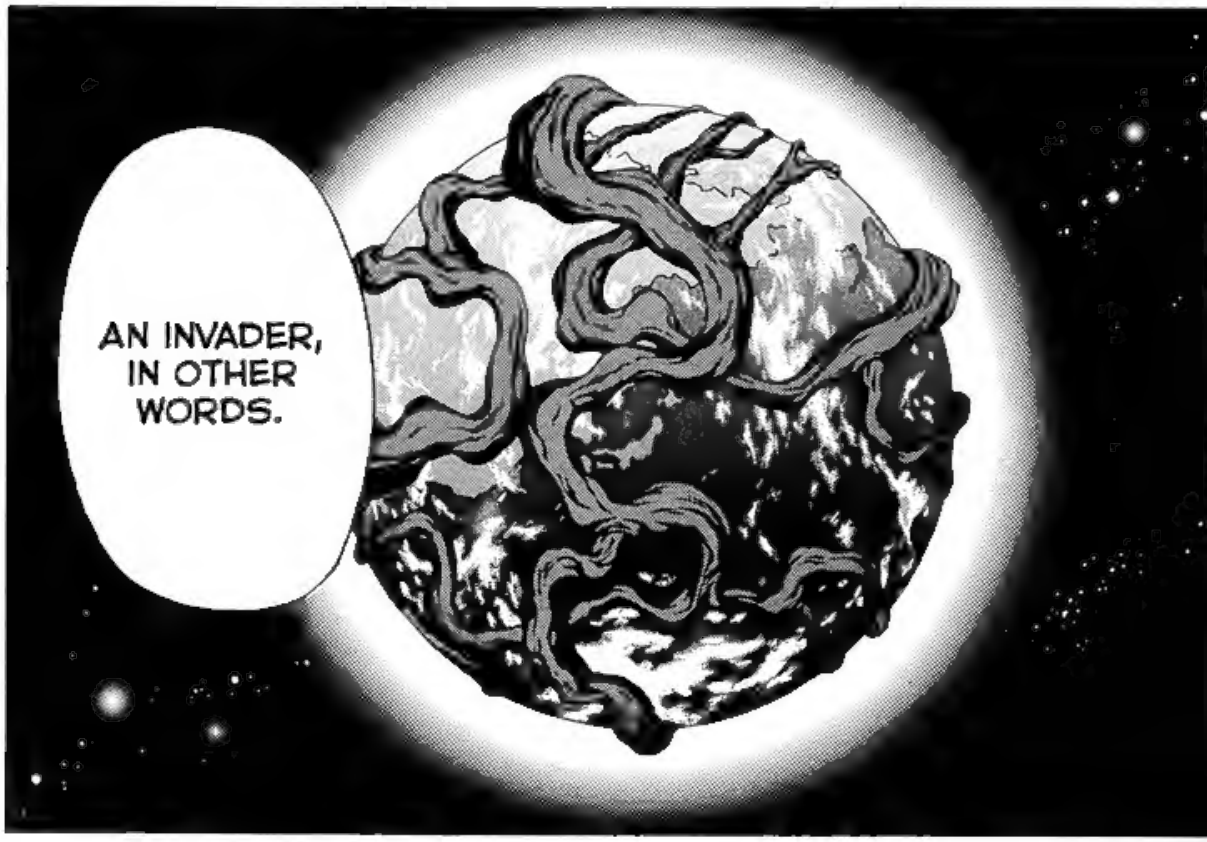
IF YOU CAN'T FIND THEM, IT'S FINE.
HOW-EV-ER...


IT WOULDN'T BE STRANGE FOR THOSE 2 THINGS TO HAVE BEEN SHATTERED WITHIN THAT STORM.

Heh...
IF YOU CAN SUCCESSFULLY RETRIEVE THEM,
IT MEANS THAT NATURAL LAW
WILL BE ACTING ACCORDING TO MY WILL.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, ALL OF A SUDDEN...
SERPENTS AND DRAGONS?
THE "TREE OF GENESIS" HAS MANY POINTS IN COMMON...
WITH THE LEGENDS OF SERPENT GODS AND DRAGON GODS THAT REMAIN IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD.
...
THE "TREE OF GENESIS" HAS APPEARED AND RAMPAGED LIKE A SERPENT OR DRAGON.
AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT FERTILITY.
THE "TREE OF GENESIS" IS NOT A GOD THAT CREATED THE WORLD FROM NOTHING.
AND IF THOSE LEGENDS INCLUDE AN ASPECT OF REALITY,

IT CAME FROM BEYOND THE WORLD THAT ALREADY EXISTED.


AN INVADER, IN OTHER WORDS.

An invader...?

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